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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the educational experiences of refugee youth attending high schools operated by the Public, Catholic and Francophone school boards in an urban center in Alberta. This qualitative study includes their experiences inside and outside of schools, their support systems as well as any tensions experienced due to race, culture or gender. It draws its analysis from the symbolic interactionism theoretical perspective. The study has brought to light the significance of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1979), the matters of normalization (Foucault, 1979, 1990) that work through school processes (Moore, 2004) causing students to feel marginalized and excluded. Issues of social reproduction are also evident. Moreover, students contend with problems over race and discrimination. The findings of the study bring about urgency for administrators of education systems to amend their policies, question and transform imbedded power relations and implement an anti racist pedagogy ensuring the success of all students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful parents:

My (late) father

Mohamed Jaffer Bahadurali Mawji

Who always encouraged his children to study further

And to

My mother

Laila Nasser Mawji

Whose love and thirst for knowledge has always inspired me. Even though my mother's opportunities for studies were painfully limited due to the era she lived in, her thirst for knowledge has not diminished.

I admire and love you both dearly!

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Introduction

Positioning the Researcher

Education of refugee[1] youth would be of interest to all educators, including myself. Canada welcomes many refugees (refugee-immigrants or refugee claimants) every year from various parts of the world and teachers must be equipped to serve and instruct these young minds coming into their classrooms. My interests in this topic are two fold, having being a refugee youth myself and presently as a teacher. Firstly, I arrived in Canada with my family as an economic refugee from Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo) in the mid seventies. As a newly arrived French speaking youth, I had to switch my medium of learning to English, acquire new friends and adjust myself to a vastly different culture. I had excellent family and community support to assist me in acculturating myself, however in the realm of schooling, life was not as pleasant. As a student who spoke mostly French, there was no extra support from the school system. I was expected to join my age cohort in their grades and learn as any other student. No accommodations or acknowledgement of this difference were made, or assistance given to ensure that I succeed. Of all the subjects, English was the most difficult. Only one teacher stands out in my mind assisting me daily after school to catch up on my school work. No others took the time to understand or even ask about my situation. I eventually completed my studies and became a teacher myself.

My second interest in this study is that of an educator. I began to have refugee students in my elementary classrooms who spoke little to no English. Some had attended

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[1] A refugee is a person who has fled from danger and oppression in one country and resettled in another (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). In Canada, a refugee-immigrant is an individual who has applied for refugee status from another country before leaving for Canada and a refugee claimant is an individual who applies for refugee status upon arrival in Canada (Cole, 1998). For the purpose of this study, no differentiation has been made on the type of refugees, nor were any questions asked pertaining to the subjects' status.

schools in their heritage countries while others had gaps in their studies. As a teacher, I understood their difficulties but found myself overwhelmed and frustrated in looking for resources and support to tutor my newcomer students and effectively teach some twenty seven other students in my classroom. The resources and support for teachers for these students was so limited and difficult to find that it prompted me to conduct a study on the refugee youth's experiences in the school system.

Of particular interest to me are the refugee youth's educational experiences in and outside of school, their challenges, support systems, friends and issues of discrimination. Educational research shows that refugee youth are having difficulties in schools and the drop out rate from high school is significant (Watt & Roessing, 2001; Derwing et al. 1999). Many of them have mental health issues due to their past living conditions (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). Over 30% live in poverty in their new land (Cole, 1998). Learning the language of the host country is always a challenge (Cole, 1998; McBrien 2005), thus their success in school has been limited. Most of these Canadian studies, and specifically Albertan based studies showed that English Language Learners (ELL) of whom many are refugees have about a 70 % high school drop out rate (Watt & Roessingh, 2001; Derwing et al., 1999). Another Alberta study showed that, in particular, African Francophone students were having a difficult time adjusting and integrating into the school system and Canadian culture (Ngala, 2005). On the other hand, Lori Wilkinson's study shows the opposite, that Alberta refugee youth are integrating well in the Canadian society (Wilkinson, 2001). Though this last study is very thorough, I feel that it had a large number of participants (over 60%) who are considered 'non visible minorities'[2], and thus the results of this study may not be as generalizable across all refugees. The majority of these participants were from the former Yugoslavia and Poland, thus they would be able to integrate with greater ease into Canadian society. Visible

[2] Statistics Canada defines a 'visible minority' as an individual who is non Caucasian or non-white in colour (Statistics Canada, 2008), thus making the Wilkinson study (2001) mostly about 'white' people. It is interesting to note that Canada continues to use this term even though the United Nations has criticized it as racist term or concept (Edwards 2007).

minorities, on the other hand, have greater barriers to integration on the basis of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion (George & Doyle, 2005; Shepard, 2008)

From my own experience as a refugee youth and now as a teacher, I wanted to better understand the refugee youth's experiences relating to their schools and their support systems in the local environment. Support systems were found to be critical in the adjustment of refugee youth (Cole, 1998; McBrien, 2005; Marotta, 2003) yet I felt that these were not adequately covered by the previous Alberta studies on refugee youth. Thus I decided to focus my research on the educational experiences of refugee youth and how settlement agencies (as support systems) assist in this education process.

Purpose and Significance of the Research

The purpose of this study is to describe, analyze and interpret the educational experiences of refugee youth in a large metropolitan city in Alberta. It is a means to give the students a voice, to narrate their stories and speak about their experiences. My primary question for this study is: "What are the educational experiences of refugee youth?" Subsequent questions are then used to address this study further:

1. How do refugee students view their experiences in schools?
2. How do their parents, friends and settlement agencies support their education?
3. Do students face racial or cultural tensions as they pursue their education?

Seven multi-ethnic high school youth were selected from several homework clubs operated by settlement agencies. Due care was taken to ensure that these students attended one of the schools within the three school boards in the city: the Public, Catholic and the Francophone school systems. Due to the long and complicated process of obtaining permission from school systems to interview students, these were recruited through homework clubs and referrals from other students.

Drawing on the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism, semi structured interviews were conducted to capture the students' voices, perceptions, attitudes and interpretations of their educational experiences. The study then allows for the understanding of their reality as they describe it. This method of research also permits the different interpretations and multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge that the youth have about their experiences. Also the process of acquiring the data is personal and interactive, allowing for further explanations and elaborations of emerging topics and points of view.

A number of theoretical concepts are used to guide the analysis of the interview data. A variety of theorists and concepts are highlighted (cultural capital, power / knowledge, normalization) to understand the success of some refugees over others. These theories and connections express that the accumulated knowledge, experiences and connections that individuals acquire in their lives allow some to be more successful than others. These concepts help to understand the difficulties and marginalization that some refugee students face due to school processes that govern the present school systems. The perspectives on school processes show us that the manner in which schools are organized and operated allow for the categorization, ordering and sorting of students into groups (Moore, 2004). Finally, the issues of acculturation, racialization and gender are best understood using the perspectives of race and ethnic relations literature. All of these perspectives or concepts are used to analyze and understand the experiences of the youth as they describe them in their interviews.

Informal meetings were conducted with various settlement agencies in order to augment the understanding of the educational experiences of refugee youth, and to understand the support systems available to students through such agencies. These meetings also assisted in developing an understanding of the context and conditions under which refugee youth and families live in the city. These discussions further informed my study on the role these agencies play in the education of refugee youth. Two of the most prominent organizations in the city were chosen to begin such informal meetings, thereafter the process snowballed into many new names and agencies.

Meetings with various education coordinators, stakeholders, youth and family workers took place throughout the two years of the study. My own participation and attendance in homework clubs, forums, seminars and conferences held through these two years provided me with a personal insight into the lives of the refugee youth.

This topic of study is significant in these present times of high migration. As mentioned earlier, Canada has welcomed many refugees from war torn countries. Alberta, which has the third largest refugee population in Canada after Ontario and British Columbia, receives about 2 500 refugees (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007) on a yearly basis, many of them being of school age. This topic of discussion is significant not only in Alberta or Canada. The whole Western world is also dealing with this difficult issue of successfully educating refugee youth. Studies on refugees can be found from many countries such as the United States (Marotta, 2005; Chung et al., 2000; McBrien, 2005), United Kingdom (Hodes, 2000), Australia (Hamilton & Moore, 2004) and of course Canada (Cole, 1998; Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996). As these youth attend local schools, educational stakeholders need to understand their perceptions, interpretations and educational experiences. These are multifaceted. As people leave their heritage countries, they leave behind not only conflicts, but also family, friends and support systems. As they arrive in the host country, they must learn a new culture and various systems of bureaucracy, often a new language, find employment and develop a new support system of friends and community members. The youth spend the majority of their time in schools, learning and interacting with various levels of authorities and activities. In addition, friends, parents and teachers are all involved in making these experiences either positive or negative. Moreover, social class, race, ethnicity, culture and gender all play their roles as these intersect with students' experiences inside and outside of school.

As refugee students increase in our school systems, I feel that it is imperative that as teachers and educators, we are well equipped to support and teach them the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to be successful in their new home. From the past experiences of my family I have learned that settling down into a new country is very

difficult, and that research shows education and employment are the two greatest domains where success is necessary for an improved life (Cole, 1998; McBrien, 2005). Thus, as educators, our roles are critical in ensuring that refugee students who attend our schools are given the necessary support to be successful in completing their remaining years of school and graduate with a high school diploma so they can pursue post secondary education. Thus an understanding of the students' experiences and perspectives, through these semi structured interviews, as well as an appreciation of the context and support within which they live their lives are essential in bringing us awareness and recognition of their life circumstances. Therefore as stakeholders we must find better means of providing meaningful education and support to refugee youth so that they become successful vibrant Canadian citizens.

Chapter One

Review of the Literature

Studies on the education of refugee youth show that their success in education lies in positive acculturation and learning the language of the host society. These in turn rely heavily on psychological factors, family and peer support and prior school experience. In this chapter, I explore the literature as it pertains to these important factors in the educational success of refugee youth: acculturation, psychological factors, social support network, factors in education and success in schools. Moreover, informal meetings, websites and publications are also used as sources of information to set the context within which stakeholders (such as settlement agencies, schools, government agencies ...) assist refugee youth in their education. Their points of view and perspectives on the educational experiences of refugee youth have also been taken into account. The larger youth refugee population's thoughts and concerns have also been captured through a youth forum held in May 2007 which shed light on the refugee students' challenges in and outside of schools. The Alberta context below is provided to set the background against which this study is being undertaken.

Alberta Context

In the last ten years Canada has welcomed an average of 22 000 to 35 000 refugees yearly into the country. They have come from many different nations within Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, South and Central America, United States, Europe and the United Kingdom. Canada Immigration Commission settles them in various parts of Canada. Thereafter, many choose to migrate to other cities or provinces looking to be closer to families or for better economic and educational prospects (Abu Laban et al, 1999).

Alberta receives about 7% of the refugees accepted into Canada, thus making the official count coming to the province to be about 2500 on a yearly basis (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). Two thirds of these are destined for the two metropolitan

areas of Edmonton and Calgary (Abu Laban et al, 1999). Smaller centers of Lethbridge, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray also receive government sponsored refugees in order to spread the refugee population wider throughout the province. Thi does not take into account the internal, statistically undocumented, migration of refugees that has recently occurred with the economic boom in Alberta.

According to a mixed method Alberta study conducted by Abu Laban et al. (1999), 40% of the refugees previously destined for smaller centers moved to larger centers within Alberta, Ontario or British Columbia, a rate which is much higher than the 24% mobility rate of the general public. The reasons given for this move, as stated earlier, have been mostly for better employment and educational opportunities, as well as to be closer to families and their own ethnic communities. The refugees interviewed in this study felt that learning the English language, education and finding employment were key factors in being successful in their new country.

Moke Ngala (2005) wrote that francophone African refugees newly arrived in Alberta face many academic and integration problems in their francophone schools. The schools do not have the resources to provide adequate learning experiences for these youth to be successful in their learning. Many of them are failing. Parents also have financial limitations in providing extracurricular activities for the youth to become involved positively in school activities. On the other hand, Wilkinson (2001) states that refugee youth are integrating well into the Alberta life while keeping their culture, the majority of them have been successful in schools and are poised to enter post secondary schools. Their occupational aspirations are comparable to Canadian born youth.

Why is there such a discrepancy? The individuals in the sample of the above mentioned studies may shed some light on this discrepancy. The francophone youth are mostly Africans while half of Wilkinson's participants are from the former Yugoslavia. The status of being a 'non-white' reduces the youth's integration level as stated earlier in the Introduction.

Acculturation

Building a life in a new country is challenging in the best of circumstances, however if an individual arrives as a refugee, his/her state of affairs are greatly complicated. Cole (1998) states that acculturation to a new country is determined by several factors such as pre and post migration stressors, circumstances around their relocation, personal characteristics and resources, social support, family stability and the welcoming or unwelcoming host society. McBrien (2005) also argues that the refugee students' educational success is positively correlated to their acculturation.

Acculturation, according to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, is defined as "cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture; a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact" (Merriam-Webster OnLine Dictionary, 2008). Acculturation thus refers to the cultural changes that occur when two or more cultures come in contact. It is a developmental process involving change within an individual over time (Anderson, 2004).

There are a number of theories that attempt to explain the process of acculturation, yet at this point there is no consensus among researchers as what is the most successful means of acculturation. Berry and Ogbu have studied the acculturation process of refugees, immigrants and marginalized groups in North America and their theories are discussed below as they seem to be the most relevant. This acculturation occurs at a group level (Ogbu, 1995) as well as at an individual level (Berry, 1995, 1999). When refugees arrive in a country, they typically come in groups as their flight from their country has been triggered by circumstances that have affected a whole region. Thus refugees tend to come in a host country as a cohesive minority group that share significant characteristics with one another. For this reason, group processes and individual adaptations need to be considered in describing acculturation (Anderson, 2004).

Refugees are usually involuntary immigrants who are often not able to return home (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996). This forced migration makes them more susceptible

and predisposes them to an oppositional cultural frame of reference (Ogbu, 1995) and negative cultural attitudes (Berry, 1995), both indicating possible negative outcomes. Ogbu (1995) defines cultural frame of reference as "intimately related to collective or group identity" (p.197). If the two cultures coming together are similar to one another, such as the British and Canadian cultures, their frames of reference are not in opposition to one another and both groups can live, side by side. However, when two very different cultures come together, for example, the Somali and Canadian cultures, conflict can easily arise. Moreover, there is usually a power imbalance where one group, typically the host society, has more culture specific knowledge and tools to succeed than the other (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1996). In addition, people who are very different have more difficulty in communicating and relating to one another. All of these circumstances can lead to oppositional cultural frame of reference by the involuntary minority group. As Ogbu (1995) states,

> ... the perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate for group members is emotionally charged because it is intimately bound up with their sense of self worth and security in the face of denigration by the dominant group. (p.197)

Negative cultural attitudes (Berry, 1995) are an individual's attitudes towards intercultural contact and cultural maintenance associated with negative outcomes. Both negative cultural attitudes and oppositional cultural frame of reference are more likely to develop due to cross cultural contacts when the minority group is disadvantaged.

As refugees begin to rebuild their lives in a new country, they need to adjust to the norms and ways of the host society. They require the necessary skills to function successfully in their new society. These include language competency, values, rituals and goals of the host society, culturally valued knowledge and expertise, to name a few. At a group level, the refugees support their own group members in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge of the host society, enabling them to be successful participants in the mainstream society without compromising their own cultural identity. If the group feels disenfranchised, marginalized, subordinated from the mainstream society, there is a greater likelihood of developing an oppositional frame of cultural reference (Ogbu, 1995). If such an oppositional frame of cultural reference does develop within the group,

it will impede the ability of their individual group members to acquire the necessary tools of the mainstream culture and retain their cultural identity. Their collective problem of low status will force the group to come up with a collective solution, further strengthening their in-group identities. However, this strong in-group bond can make it difficult for individual members to cross the cultural boundaries to acquire the necessary tools, values and attitudes of the mainstream society. By crossing such cultural boundaries, individual members may loose their own cultural identity and may experience opposition from other members.

Ogbu (1995) describes this difference using the example of Asian immigrants who have done well in the United States and the African Americans who are still suffering from the oppositional frame of cultural reference as follows. If the minority group does not feel marginalized or disenfranchised from the mainstream society, it may see cultural differences only as barriers to overcome. If the members of the cultural group acquire the attitude that acquiring the tools and values of the mainstream society is a necessary means of upward mobility and their success within the mainstream society does not threaten their ethnic group identity, group members then feel free to acquire these skills without losing 'in group' membership. On the other hand, if the cultural group feels disenfranchised or marginalized by the mainstream society, the oppositional frame of cultural reference discourages group members to acquire the necessary skills in fear of being perceived as traitors to their ethnic communities.

However, not all individuals are the same, including refugees (Cole, 1996). People change and acculturate at different rates and also in different directions. As such Berry (1995) proposes two issues when cross cultural contacts occur. These are cultural maintenance (how much a person wants to preserve his own cultural identity and associated behaviours) and contact participation (how much contact and participation the person wants to be involved with the mainstream society). Considering these two issues as independent of one another, there are four different strategies that individuals have for acculturation to the mainstream society.

According to Berry (1995) assimilation is the most likely path for an individual who does not wish to retain his culture of origin and wants frequent contacts with the

mainstream society. The outcome of this strategy will be the acquisition of the tools, values and language of the host society accompanied by the loss of his culture of origin. The opposite of assimilation is separation whereby the individual wishes to retain all the values and norms of his culture of origin and avoids contact with the host culture. With this strategy, the individual is not likely to acquire the necessary tools required to function successfully in the host society but will maintain his own culture and identity. Integration is the most favourable where the individual wants to acquire the necessary tools of the host culture and at the same time maintain his own cultural identity. The least favourable is that of marginalization where the person has little concern in maintaining his own culture and little interest in having relations with the dominant culture. This strategy may result in individuals developing the oppositional frame of cultural reference (Anderson, 2004).

Berry (1999) takes the theory of acculturation further by looking at cultural orientations for both the host group and the newcomers at the individual, national and institutional levels. At the individual level, one can consider the attitudes of tolerance and prejudice the host society displays towards the acculturating group and how the newcomers pursue their strategies in keeping contact with the dominant society yet maintaining their own cultural identity. Berry (1999) continues his argument of acculturation at the national level where the host country considers multicultural policies and immigration issues within the mainstream society. Finally, at the institutional level, Berry (1999) states this is where conflict is likely to arise. As they embark on an integration strategy, the newcomers seek equity and an appreciation of diversity from the dominant culture. However, institutions of the dominant culture such as schools, health care, justice systems operate from uniform programs and standards corresponding to an assimilation approach, thus creating areas of tension between the host and minority communities. Therefore these institutions are critical to the process of acculturation and the mutual cooperation and adaptation of all groups (Anderson, 2004). Also critical to the acculturation process is the psychological state of the newly arrived individual. These psychological factors are discussed in the next section.

Psychological Factors

Many refugees suffer from psychological distress, whether it is caused by their experiences before settlement or during the process of settlement. Experiences during wars or in refugee camps can involve witnessing murders, rapes, abductions, loss of family and possessions all of which can cause individuals to suffer trauma. Everyone's responses to such circumstances vary (Cole, 1998), yet many do need counselling upon resettlement in order to heal and build trust. Marotta (2003) and Hodes (2000) observed that up to 40 % of refugees suffer from psychiatric disorders, including depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[3] and other anxiety related difficulties.

Cultural bereavement during the settlement process can also cause psychological distress. The uprooting of a family from their country, culture, extended family members can cause disruption in self concept, depression and cultural dissonance (McBrien, 2005). Children integrate or assimilate earlier than their parents (Hodes 2000), causing disruptions in family organizations. Children take on parental roles, such as writing cheques, interpreting for their parents as the elders continue to have difficulties with the foreign language and institutional systems and depend on their youth for greater assistance (McBrien 2005). Strained family relationships occur due to changes in gender roles as fathers being the traditional bread earners are no longer able to find work. Involvement in the new culture brings about changes in family dynamics, causing distress at the loss of culture and traditions (Chung et al, 2000). During these difficult transitional times, refugee families members require support from each another as well as from the communities at large. In the following section, this support network is discussed in greater details

[3] Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder caused by a psychologically traumatic event. Individuals may suffer flashbacks or nightmares. It can be severe, not allowing the person to lead a normal life (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2008)

Social Support Network

A social support network is crucial for refugees to be successful in their new country. As part of a successful educational experience, refugee students must have a strong social support network, family stability and community services available to them (Cole, 1998). Research has found that if counsellors and/ or social workers acknowledge and recognize people's ethnic or cultural identities and use interpreters, their clients are better able to adjust to the new culture. Social networks are also developed when culturally similar families who have been in the host society for a longer period of time share and assist the newcomers in providing services, such as parenting and anger management, as well as supporting them to connect with the majority culture (Chung et al., 2000; Morland, 2005).

Newcomers also find it difficult to access the services provided by the host country due to their lack of familiarity of language, systems and services, as well as the lack of understanding of refugee cultures by the service providers, therefore same culture families become critical in bridging the gap between the two, acting as mediators for both parties (Morland, 2005). Caring volunteers who coach and act as protectors can assist in mitigating stresses and trauma, support in fostering resilience and channel the trauma in constructive ways (Frater-Mathieson, 2004). This social support thus is critical in assisting new families and children to cope within their psychological distress and the new culture. Education, discussed in the next section, is another factor that assists in restoring emotional healing in refugee students.

Factors in Education

Education is crucial in restoring social and emotional healing in refugee students (McBrien, 2005). Cole (1998) asserts that the learning of the host country's language is a powerful factor in the adjustment of refugee students. It is a bridge for socialization and schooling, it opens windows of opportunity. Conversely, difficulty in learning the language impedes education, social integration and employment opportunities.

Successful education is critical for refugee students' adaptation to the host country, yet research shows that they have many difficulties in the school system. When a child first joins the school, there is often a reluctance from parents to reveal information about their past, their gaps in education (Cole, 1998; Hodes, 2000) due to fear and mistrust of authority. This lack of information impedes the teacher's understanding of the student's lack of basic skills as well as brings about frustration for the student in understanding the teacher's directions and coping with gaps in learning.

The learning of the host language is very important in refugee student adaptation. Experiences with the host language are varied upon arrival to the new country. For the majority of these youth, English is not their first language. Depending on their country of origin or their educational background, they may have some knowledge of the English language. Some may have studied in their heritage language only and have no prior knowledge of English. Others may have studied in English medium schools in their countries. They usually have a repertoire of several other languages, however they may not be literate in their reading and writing. Therefore refugee youth arriving in their new host country are often designated as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students as they are not proficient in the host language. These two terms are often used interchangeably in the literature and in the school systems.

Cummins (1994) states that it can take only up to two years for English as a Second Language students to develop conversational English known as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), yet it can take up to five to seven years for them to reach academic and cognitive language proficiency, known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) of their school aged peers. Teachers can often mistake the youth's ability to speak English as ability to also read and write fluently. Cummins argues that the present school system discriminates against ESL students by its lack of adaptation in accommodating what is becoming a norm in every school, the presence of ESL students. These discriminations come in the form of policies of the federal, provincial and local governments that do not take into account the needs of these students and but continue with policies that are detrimental to them, such as the policies

of streaming/tracking students, psychological assessments, special education, setting up entrance and exit criteria. Teacher education programs do not take issues relating to ESL students as important. Very little time and resources are dedicated to such topics within the teacher education program. There is an absence of staff in the schools that speak diverse languages who can assist parents and children in communication, tutoring and being successful at schools. The curriculum is based on the values and experiences of the middle class Native- English speaking white population, effectively suppressing the values of ESL students. Principals are promoted to leadership positions without considering their skills and willingness to make changes to accommodate ESL students. Cummins (1994) also argues, from his anti racist, global justice framework, that the failures of educators to focus on the interpretations of student experiences and the matters of social justice compound the problems of discrimination against ESL students as they are unable to voice their points of view. There is also an over-representation of ESL students in special education classes and in low academic streams at the secondary level. Isolation of students from a lack of success in schools results in lower levels of employment, leading to further isolation and exclusion from the society.

Derwing et al. (1999) found that ESL students in Alberta face a number of challenges in schools. There are uneven power relationships between ESL and Native English speaking students and teachers leading to the ESL students' marginalization. There is a failure by teachers to recognize linguistic differences between students and the educational gaps they may have in their learning. The researchers found that 54% of ESL students graduated from high school, including 14% who earned 100 credits, but did not meet the high school requirements for a diploma. Forty six percent of students did not complete high school. Out of these, 10% were either pushed out due to Alberta's age cap policy and the other 36% dropped out. The average high school completion rate of Alberta students is 70%, much higher than the completion rate of ESL students.

However, another Albertan study by Watt and Roessingh (2001) disputes the figure set out by Derwing et al. They propose a specific definition of student success, calculated by the completion of high school graduation requirements and earning a

diploma. This more recent definition will increase Derwing's figure of ESL drop out rate to a higher number. The ESL drop out rate across the province has remained consistent at about 74%, a great difference from 35% drop out rate of Native English speaking students (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). According to the Watt and Roessingh study, funding for ESL programming is dependent on political forces that sway between fiscal restraints and reinvestment in education. It is not based on students' needs, which is unfortunate as the success of these children is critical to the growth of Canada.

Both Alberta studies agree that ESL students have been disadvantaged in high schools with graduation remaining a difficult goal. They both advocate for better ESL instructional services and the removal of the age cap for these youth to be successful. Alberta Education mandates schools to offer education to students between the ages of 5 to 19, forcing students out of high school when they complete their nineteenth year of life, whether or not they have gained a high school diploma. This policy prevents many students from attaining a high school diploma, a necessary requisite for post secondary education. Upgrading at college is always a possibility, however the financial cost limits options for many students. Funding from Alberta Employment and Immigration is available upon the condition that students must not be attending any educational institution in the past twelve consecutive months. This mandatory break in their studies lead the students to look for employment, then lose their motivation to go back to school a year later. Fortunately, this policy of a twelve month break from education has been recently amended. It will be discussed further in Chapter Three. Without a high school diploma, refugee students end up working at minimum wage employment, often working at several jobs to make ends meet.

Derwing et al. (1999) found that both ESL students and teachers feel that ESL classes have a negative stigma attached to them. Both groups feel that they are not treated with dignity, with students not regarded as smart and teachers perceived as babysitters. There is often a lack of support from staff and administration over ESL issues, including support inside the classrooms.

Issues of structural and stereotypic racism are also prevalent (McBrien, 2005; Derwing et al, 1999) with youth being ridiculed if they speak with a heavy accent, or in their native tongue. There is a strong correlation between alienation and insufficient language skills. According to Derwing et al. (1999), to reduce racism more integration between Native speakers and ESL students is necessary, along with teachers taking genuine interest in the lives and cultures of ESL students.

According to McBrien (2005), other factors that can cause a student to drop out of high school are a student's self perceptions of his/her negative or minimal academic abilities, rejection from peers, exhibition of antisocial behaviours, unsafe school conditions or a lack of academic preparation to enter higher institutions of learning. Refugee students' experiences in refugee camps sometimes result in maladjustment alienating the youth further from school, peers and family. The youth are then more likely to turn to gangs, drugs, alcohol, school dropout and sexual promiscuity (McBrien, 2005).

Schools sometimes perceive that parents are not involved and thus do not care about the child's education. Yet refugee parents, drawing on past educational experiences, feel that the teachers are the experts and they do not need to be involved (McBrien, 2005). Parents care for their children and are involved in their own way providing shelter, nutrition, health, safety or assistance with homework to their children (Caines, 2005). Thus caring for their children's education does not necessarily entail going to meetings or school events. Parents, on the other hand, feel that the teachers do not take the initiative in learning about the child's beliefs systems or culture (Ramirez, 2003). The schools do not take extra steps in ensuring that all parents participate in school activities, do not make interpreters available in the school's open house. Razavi (2005) speaks of many different barriers that parents face in their participation of their children's education, including the lack of intercultural communication between school and parent. The schools thus need to develop and promote communication between home and school, using interpreters and multilingual services consistently to ensure parent involvement in schools and in their child's education (Cole, 1998).

Other areas of development in the schools (Cole, 1998) that can assist refugee students are assessments that are not language based but are more performance based and culturally fair tests. This will reduce the over representation of minority students in non academic streams, and not mislabel them as underachievers. Comprehensive psychological testing show that students with language learning gaps are not necessarily special needs (Cummins, 1994; Cole, 1998).

Cole (1998) also states that schools need a multidisciplinary approach with other agencies to provide counselling and consultation, be more culturally sensitive and train staff in recognizing cultural nuances.

Success in Schools

Watt and Roessingh (2001) say that a good indication of success in schools has been the students' educational background and English language proficiency upon entry into high schools. According to Derwing et al. (1999), successful students were those that took initiative in asking for assistance, showed determination and perseverance in achieving their goal, and made friends with native English speaking peers. In contrast, non completers tended to be more passive and not taking initiative in seeking assistance.

There are several factors that determine refugee students' success in schools. Competence in the mainstream language and academic skills (Cole 1998, Watt & Roessingh, 2001), social network of community services and supports (Cole 1998, McBrien 2005), acculturation and parental support (McBrien 2005), students' positive self beliefs and some teacher support (Derwing et al, 1999; McBrien, 2005), family stability (Cole, 1998), successful psychological adjustment to stress and trauma (Sinclair, 2001as cited by McBrien, 2005; Hodes, 2000). However Mosselson (2002) as cited by McBrien (2005) cautions that doing well in school does not necessarily mean being well. He has found many youth suffering from depression despite doing well academically. This shows that successful schooling for refugee children is dependent on various factors which imply that different service providers need to take active roles in assisting refugee

youth. Success does not come from one front only, but from a coalition of partners carrying out their respective roles (Hodes, 2000).

Research From Other Sources

As part of ascertaining the various services offered to refugee youth, I visited several settlement agencies in a large urban center. A settlement agency is usually a community agency whose mandate is to assist immigrants and refugees to become full participants in the community. They provide a range of services, including English Language, employment, counselling (settlement and personal), community development, advocacy and education. They are usually funded by the Federal and Provincial governments, the United Way, Family and Community Support Services, the United Nations and various other agencies. Examples of such agencies in Alberta are the Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers, Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, Catholic Social Services, Edmonton Immigration Services Association, Immigrant Settlement Services, Calgary Immigration Aid Society, Alliance Jeunesse Francaise de l' Alberta, Lethbridge Family Services – Immigrant Services, Centre d'Acceuil, Calgary Immigrant Educational Society, Millwood Welcome Center, Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative Ltd, to name a few. The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) works closely with all settlement agencies to assist in providing equitable education for all Albertans. I also visited the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII) and attended many of their seminars on the issue of education of refugees and immigrants.

My involvement with six settlement agencies consisted of informal meetings with youth and family workers and educational coordinators, becoming a volunteer in their homework clubs, reading through their websites and publications and attending several seminars and conferences offered to stake holders. This was done to build a good understanding of the context under which services are given, the challenges of the refugee youth, and the role these agencies play in their education. Meetings and seminars with NAAR and PCERII provided me with more research based information, in

comparison to settlement agencies that provided me with personal anecdotes and experiences of refugees in the city.

Services Provided by Settlement Agencies

The services provided by settlement agencies are aimed at assisting refuge students with their education. Most of the agencies provide homework clubs where university student volunteers assist refugee youth with their school work. These volunteers provide individual assistance in understanding various school subjects and in completing homework. The setting also provides social support for refugee youth as they practice speaking the host language, become involved in playing educational games such as Pictionary and build friendships with the volunteers. These are held after school hours within a school building or on weekends in community halls or agency offices.

Some agencies provide an after school culture club where the refugee youth learn about the ways of the Canadian culture, while appreciating their own as well as other newcomers' cultures. They learn basic life skills such as, how to deal with racism and build conflict resolution skills, understand the Canadian legal system, acquire personal safety skills, avoid drugs and gangs, and develop nutritional and healthy eating habits. They also learn to write resumes, search for employment, and learn about Canadian work ethics. One agency has been able to partner with a high school and change such non formal education described above into formal education where students receive high school course credits in a course entitled "Integration and Education" as a CALM (Career and Life Management credit) diploma requirement. Students in the CALM program and culture clubs learn similar things. They also go on field trips to become familiar with their city and receive guest speakers to talk about different issues. Both these agencies have formed partnerships with each other in some projects and offer joint programs to refugee youth. In this manner, students are able to build friendships with other students attending various schools or programs. Friday evening dance clubs also provide a social and friendship network for youth. Students are not bound to any one

agency (as it is the case in a school), but participate in programs offered by various agencies, building a wider social network.

Settlement agencies also provide cultural brokers to assist families and schools enhance communication, mediate between the home and the school in case of difficulties with expulsion, behaviour problems, assessments, streaming, etc. They also assist families in understanding school expectations. Agencies also provide seminars and presentations to teachers and principals on matters related to newcomers, such as cultural sensitivity, referrals, consultation, and program development. By providing a variety of services to refugee students, families and schools, settlement agencies' workers have come to understand the realities that refugee students face in their education. Below are the agencies' perspectives on the education of refugee youth.

Settlement Agencies' Perspectives

According to the settlement agencies, there are many systemic problems in the education of refugee youth. They find that teachers treat refugee students as any other ESL student, not recognizing that their life experiences are different. If parents do not come to meetings or not participate in school activities, the teachers feel that the parents do not care. Agencies suggested that teachers do not realize that there may be other factors such as language barriers or employment responsibilities that impede parental involvement with school activities. Parents also feel intimidated by the language and the school system. Parents will not speak out as they mistrust authority, they feel that things will become worse for their children. Refugee parents have high expectations of their children and children too have high aspirations. However, there seems to be a lack of guidance for refugee students, to enable them to choose appropriate courses and acquire the necessary credits to achieve their goals of graduation. Many of the agencies argue that the school needs to work with the students and set goals with them so they may achieve good grades, post secondary education or gainful employment and not stream refugee youth into non academic subjects.

Settlement agencies feel that schools become very defensive and often become hostile when settlement workers bring these problems to light. The school is not willing to accept that some of these problems may be caused by the education system or its teachers. The schools also perceive these difficulties as the child's fault, not recognizing that other children may be facing similar challenges produced by the education system itself.

The agencies also confirm the high rate of high school drop out as well as the lack of classroom support for refugee students as identified in the literature review. The Eurocentric curriculum is not helpful. Students are not able to comprehend the context with which lessons are taught. Textbooks often lack examples from other cultures that are more familiar to them. The histories of geographic areas other than the "West" are not covered and often their cultures and people are belittled.

According to the agencies, the schools are not recognizing that there is a problem in the education of refugee youth and there is a lack of systemic initiatives in making changes. Schools are not taking advantage of their cultural brokers who can assist them in providing education. The agencies perceive that the schools see themselves as experts in their field and thus do not require help from anyone. As a result, there is more crisis intervention than prevention in the schools by not recognizing student needs, including PTSD, which then lead to major problems in the schools.

Settlement workers see that racism is prevalent in schools. Teachers do not have the skills to deal with racism and conflict resolution. Students are bullied, teased because of their accented English or the lack of English language. Professional development on racism is a low priority in schools, in fact they are hostile to this suggestion. One in ten students experience racially motivated violence in schools, while one in three witnesses such racially motivated violence (NAARR, 2004).

They also view subtle racism with the presence of many cultural and religious cliques in schools, exclusion from groups, and lack of friends from other racial groups. Students have constant reminders of not being included. Superficial differences of dance, diet and dress are recognized within schools by holding special events, however more

needs to be done to combat racism through professional development for teachers. For example, a young interviewee in my research changed schools while attending Junior High as she heard many negative comments being uttered by teachers about Black people. She was so upset with such words that she changed schools. There are many stereotypes held about certain racialized groups and students are constantly confronted by these.

From settlement agencies' perspectives, there are also problems at home. Parents are not able to participate in school activities as they work several jobs to make ends meet. They are not home in the evenings to ensure homework is done. Often they are unable to assist their children in school work, as it is in a different system, a different language or they may lack the education. Gougeon (1993) also confirms these struggles in the existing literature that parents are resistant and mistrust the school systems.

Poverty also has a direct negative impact on children. Settlement agencies observe many adult refugees' professional credentials are not being recognized. For example, doctors drive taxis, people with graduate degrees are doing low waged manual work. This creates an extra burden on families as they work several low paying jobs to make ends meet. Many refugee youths also work long hours after school and on weekends to assist their families financially. Settlement agencies state that refugees and immigrants are becoming an underclass in urban centers, many of them are the working poor.

Youth workers within the settlement agencies see a disproportionate number of refugee youth in trouble with the law. As they straddle between two cultures, not fitting in either, not being successful at schools, youth feel marginalized and are becoming easy targets for gang recruitment They are able to earn large amounts of money with criminal activities which assist them in looking after their families here and back home. They are also unaware of how the Canadian criminal and legal systems work, thus becoming easy targets. Gougeon (1993) confirms this finding in his study arguing that youth feel they have last control of their environment and move into crime. Gang related activities, Gougeon argues, not only provides easy money but also self empowerment.

Family workers see that a lack of community support, a lack of social network, and a lack of extended family members is making life isolating for many refugee families. Parents are busy with their own problems, making light of their children's problems, thinking that they will adjust as they grow up. Children are then feeling ignored and unhappy.

With all of these problems, it is no wonder that there are mental health issues. Many suffer from depression, low self esteem as confirmed by Marotta (2003) and Hodes (2000). They attempt suicide as they feel unwelcomed and marginalized. They act out in schools, retaliate against others, often taking justice into their own hands and then become criminalized through the youth justice system.

Refugee youth face many problems in schools and in their daily lives. These were further emphasized by the youth themselves at a Youth Network Forum held in May 2007.

Youth Network Forum

All of the above difficulties the youth face were brought to light further when I attended a Youth Network Forum sponsored by the Canadian Council of Refugees on May 23, 2007 in Edmonton. The purpose of the forum was to bring refugee youth together and discuss their problems and challenges and search for possible solutions.

The youth had many concerns which cannot all be enumerated in this literature review. I will mention a few core concerns that relate directly to their education. In small groups, the youth discussed, wrote their concerns and problems on chart paper and presented them to the larger group. Thereafter, the larger group of youth, youth workers, teachers, concerned individuals prioritized three to four of the most important issues that needed attention. The audience went into smaller groupings again to come up with possible solutions to these problems.

A large number of youth at the Youth Network Forum identified the Alberta Education age cap policy[4] of 19 years for high school completion to be a major obstacle. Refugee students felt that they are running out of time and once they complete their 19th year, they will not be allowed to complete their high school within the present school system. This is seen as a gatekeeper for them to achieve post secondary education. Without a high school diploma and post secondary education, the cycle of poverty continues with low levels of employment. After the age of 19, they require financial assistance to upgrade at local colleges as they are charged a fee for each course taken. The students are asking education administrators to see the unfairness in this policy when every Albertan is given the opportunity of 12 years of free education, while they are impeded from the same opportunity because they have come into the country at a later age.

Many students also identified poverty and working through school as a great concern. Refugee adults are only given 1000 hours of learning English free of charge. This, however, is not enough for many people. If they need more than the 1000 hours, it is available at a cost that they cannot afford or that will create a financial burden on the family. Adults cannot find employment if their English is lacking or heavily accented. The employers are reluctant to hire such individuals, wanting Canadian experience, bringing the burden on the youth to support their families. I met one student attending grade 11 who held two part time jobs after school and on the weekend to help support his family. His brother, under 20, and his sister of 16 years of age have both quit school to work full time as part time wages are not enough to sustain a single parent family of seven people. His mother is home taking care of younger siblings, but even then her English is limited not permitting her to find employment.

The youth expressed concern over their financial situations, discussing the different policies of the government. They feel the Federal Government is also

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[4] The ministry of Alberta Education allows students from age 5 to 19 to attend school. It dictates that students' last year of school must be at 19 years of age. Then they must leave high school to pursue their education elsewhere.

exacerbating their situation. It gives refugees financial assistance during their first year of settlement in Canada, and also expects them to pay off their travel loan within a few short years. With a family of five and a travel loan of an average of $ 1500 per person brings the debt to $7500 to be repaid in a few years. These refugees are still learning the language, do not have employment and are expected to repay this large amount of money quickly. Youth recommended that the repayment schedule needs to be examined closely and some financial respite given to families.

Moreover, the province of Alberta is going through an economic boom yet refugee families are not seeing its benefits. Employment is available yet hiring of refugees is still lagging due to their lack of English skills. Rent and food is becoming more expensive. If refugee parents, who are often students, find employment their government stipends get further reduced. Opportunities leading to better education and employment for adult and youth are closed due to lack of finances, services and education. Many of these difficulties are brought about by the policies of the different levels of government.

Policies that have been implemented by different levels of government are impeding the progress of refugees to become full working and educated members of the Canadian society. These policies need to be examined and amended to allow refugees to prosper in a country that has welcomed them. At the present time, an underclass has being created where the majority of Albertan refugees belong to the working poor class, and their opportunities for advancement through education and employment are limited. Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler (1994) also confirm these downward spiral trends of low socioeconomic mobility and high rates of academic failure in the refugee population.

The youth did bring up other concerns at this forum, but I have not included them here. In light of the present difficulties and challenges that the youth face, it is important to recognize that the settlement agencies play a supportive role to students, parents and possibly to schools if given further opportunity. For students to become successful members of Canadian society, all stakeholders (including the government) need to work together. This partnership will allow students to build social networks with peers and

community members. For the education of refugee students to be successful, their more basic needs of food, shelter, belonging and security, as described in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) have to be met first. All people have to first provide for their basic necessities of food, shelter, security and belonging before they can begin to grow and improve on their self esteem and self actualization through education and acculturation. Therefore, all levels of governments, parents, settlement agencies, schools and the students themselves have critical roles to play in making the Canadian transition successful for all involved.

Conclusion

Refugee families in Alberta are experiencing difficult times, and they hope that their youth will bring them a better lifestyle in the future (Gougeon, 1993). The parents, with their limited English skills, rely on their children for assistance. The youth feel an extra burden, trying to improve matters for themselves and also support their parents and families emotionally and financially. With these increased expectations, it is important that youth be assisted further in reaching their goals of an improved life and an improved future. Successful education, positive acculturation, family and peer support are key factors for a better future. However, the sociological and psychological literature and information acquired from stakeholders show that they are facing many challenges in their education as the present system is set up for middle class predominantly English-speaking society. The majority of these students are leaving high school without their diplomas, feeling marginalized as they still lack the skills and knowledge necessary for profitable employment. This system of education seems to fail the refugee students with its policies, curriculum, assessments and lack of support. The various levels of government are also engaged in implementing policies that are detrimental to the success of the refugee youth. Without an education, the chances for better employment and positive acculturation dwindle and the hope for a rewarding future diminishes. It is thus imperative that as researchers we allow refugee students to tell us about their experiences and perceptions of formal and non-formal education in Alberta.

Chapter Two

Methodology

Research can be carried out through both a quantitative as well as qualitative framework. The reason why a researcher chooses one framework over the other depends on the type of information, results that he/she is seeking. Quantitative methods of research tend to be based on rationalistic philosophies of research. These methods assume that the social world can be studied in the same manner as the natural world and that it is value free (Mertens, 2005). Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, spend a considerable amount of time in natural settings where their subjects are and collect data that are rich in description rather than numbers. Data sources include videos, interviews, photographs, official documents and anecdotal information (Bogden & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research is also concerned with how people make meaning, how the micro-level of interaction relates to their view points of the world –thus capturing peoples' perspectives accurately. Theoretically, this type of research has multiple perspectives, strategies and means of conducting research (interpretation of events, ethnography, case studies, etc) and draws on the sociological tradition of symbolic interactionism (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

I chose to use a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach as I wanted to ascertain how the refugee youth perceive their educational experiences (formal and non-formal), their challenges and successes. I wanted to hear their stories of attending schools, making friends, social relationships, dealing with learning a new language. Stories and emotions cannot be captured as well with a quantitative method of analysis such as surveys. Quantitative analysis reveals "what" rather than "why". Such forms of analysis might indicate what percentage of refugee youth is attending home work clubs but it might not reveal the nuanced understanding of why they might be attending such after school activities. I wanted to speak with them about their experiences and interpretations.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation that underpins the research methodology is symbolic interactionism within a sociological framework. Symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: 1) human beings act towards objects and people in their environment according to the meaning these have for them, 2) these meanings are derived from the social interaction and communication between individuals, and finally 3) these meanings are established and/or modified through interpretation of events and language (George H. Mead, 1934, Blumer, 1969, Schwandt, 1994). Symbolic interactionism views people as purposive agents that engage in self reflexive behaviours, interpret the world with the help of others and then act as interpreters, definers, creating their world and constructing meaning (Bogden & Biklen, 1998). Thus overt behaviours of people are an indication of their interpretation of their world. The concept of the self that people create through their interaction with others, they see themselves in part as others see them by interpreting their actions, gestures and communication towards them and view themselves from the perspective as the 'looking-glass self'(Harrrell, Meloff & Pierce 1992). Mead (Harrrell, Meloff & Pierce 1992) takes this concept further and discusses the composition of the self, introduces the concepts of "significant other" and the "generalized other". The concept of the self, according to Mead, consists of the subjective "I" and the objective "me". The "me" describes all the roles that we play in our lives, that of a 'daughter' or a 'son' or a 'carpenter' or 'plumber', etc. On the other hand, the "I" or self-concept is subjective as it adopts all the evaluative feelings about the self that it internalizes through its interactions with others. These internalized responses are perceived responses and may not signify 'reality', and over time these perceived responses may lead to self fulfilling prophecies, that we see what we want to see (Becker, 1963; Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Harrrell, Meloff & Pierce 1992). "Significant others" are those individuals that people have selected whose reactions are important to them, such as parents, siblings, friends, supervisors. "Generalized others" are individuals in the environment who hold a basic set of expectations from all individuals, such as dress code, hygiene, behaviour.

The ontological implication of symbolic interactionism is that there are multiple interpretations of reality, all constructed socially by peoples' perceptions of reality. These perceptions may change throughout life, and carry different meanings for different people. For example, the concepts of disability or minority may hold different meanings for different people according to their experiences of life. The constructivist paradigm rejects the notion that there is one objective reality that can be known, however the researcher's role is to find out the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge that the subjects have. Often, incidences can be interpreted in many different ways, but it is important for the researcher to emphasise the interpretation of the subjects, the way the subjects see their own world (Mertens, 2005).

Underlying symbolic interactionism is the idea that the relationship and process between the subjects and the researcher is an interactive one, each influencing the other. Knowledge is generated through inductive rather than deductive process by observing and immersing oneself in the data. Sociological scientists suggest that it is better to "get to know a subject and situation well and gradually build up, or induce, descriptions and /or explanations of what is really going on. In an inductive approach, the key concepts emerge in the final analysis of the research process" (Wallace & Wolf, 1995, p.9). There is also an interactive, more personal mode of data collection. In this type of research, the values of the researcher are made explicit (Mertens, 2005). The assumption made is that the data, the interpretations are all rooted in contexts and are not figments of the researchers' imagination. Data must be traced to their sources and logic needs to be used to explain and interpret the findings. Mertens (1998) also claims that the data can be made valid through the use of multiple sources of data and the multiple methods used to collect the data. Moreover, through the use of multiple examples and direct quotations from subjects, the researcher can logically show the inferences that are being made through the data.

Symbolic Interactionism, a sociological perspective, as part of the constructivism paradigm, is being used to understand the lived educational experiences of the refugee youth. These youth act toward their education, teachers, schools, friends according to the

meanings these institutions and people hold for them. These meanings are derived from their interactions and communications with various people. These meanings are not static; they change through different interpretations, actions and life experiences. The students' overt, observable behaviours are indications of their interpretations and meanings towards the education systems they are experiencing. Using symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework underlying my methods will allow me to understand the lived educational experiences of refugee youth, their behaviours, interpretations, perspectives as well as meanings that the present educational systems hold for them.

The refugee youth are the small part of larger educational, economic and political systems. I examine their experiences at the micro level within a greater macro system of education and government bureaucracy. A micro system can be defined as a pattern of activities, interpersonal relations experienced by people through face to face contact with other individuals. A macro system, on the other hand, is the wider structures within the society, institutions including the culture, laws and customs of a society (Turner & Markovsky, 2007).

At the macro levels of interactions, there are the Federal and the Provincial governments interacting with secondary agencies. The federal government department of Citizenship Immigration Canada (CIC) mandates the settlement agencies to assist all newcomers by offering various services to support the youth and their families in settling into their new country. On the other hand, the provincial government, specifically Alberta Education directs school boards to offer an education to all of its legal residents between the ages of 5 to 19. School boards operate several schools which follow a curriculum and standards set by this provincial department of education. Students are enrolled in these schools that follow the provincial curriculum and standards. At this point in time, Alberta Education has policies dealing with a variety of students, but nothing specific for refugee students as yet. Each local school board and local school decides for itself how best to deal with the new refugee students. At this same macro level, settlement agencies also interact with both levels of governments and schools assisting refugee families and youth

in fulfilling their educational needs. The settlement agencies provide some guidance to schools as interpreters and cultural experts, as students are integrated in mostly regular classrooms that follow the mandated curriculum. These macro level interactions between agencies, schools and the two levels of government are then translated into various services which the refugee youth receive and interact with at a personal micro level.

At the micro level, students interact with their teachers, other school personnel, students and friends in their local schools. Students may receive some extra assistance in learning English. They are, however, expected to learn and find their own place within the school and classroom communities. The settlement agencies also interact with refugee youth on an individual basis assisting them with their resettlement and educational needs.

Within the macro system of education and bureaucracy, the students are learning, communicating, and interpreting their own micro roles as they navigate themselves to educational success. By looking at their personal micro level experiences, their interpretations of the school and the larger macro systems, the study will, hopefully, give an indication of their challenges and successes. The following chart will help interpret the overall macro-micro levels involved in the education of the refugee youth.

Figure 2.1: The Interaction of the Different Macro-Micro Levels in the Education of Refugee Youth.

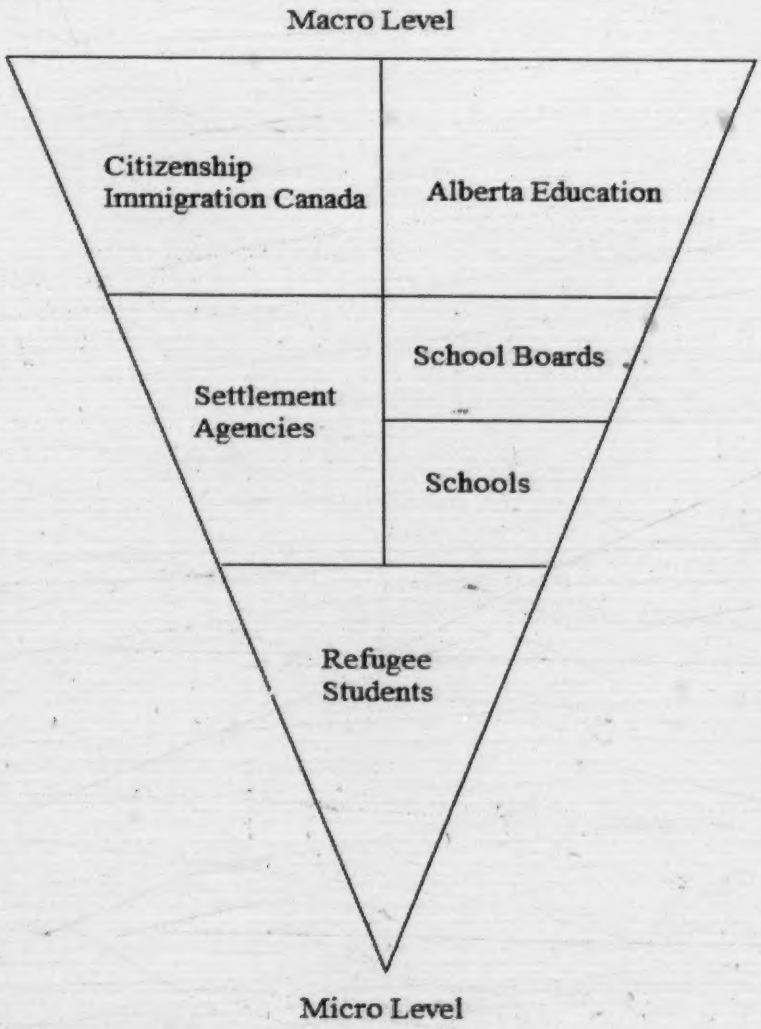

Figure created by Sabira Devjee

Research Design

Developing an Understanding of the Context

I chose to hold informal meetings with settlement agencies as they would provide me with more background information about the situation of the refugee youth. Since my study does not involve looking at the refugee students only through the perspective of the formal school, I needed another means to examine and understand the more macro organizational background against which I could place the more micro perspective garnered from student interviews. Organizations that have a great amount of contact with refugees are the settlement agencies and I felt that they would be an appropriate source to find information about the formal and non-formal educational experiences of the refugee youth.

These agencies provide assistance to immigrants and refugees through a range of services, including English Language services, employment services, counselling (settlement and personal), community development, advocacy and education.[5] The settlement agencies that I chose to visit and have informal meetings with are reputable agencies assisting most of the refugees arriving in this city. This reputation is evident because they are well recognized within the city and are funded by various government departments. I used these well known agencies as my starting point for holding informal meetings. They, in turn, then recommended me to meet other people in various agencies who would be able to assist in acquiring the information I was seeking. These recommendations snowballed into more individuals and agencies who were involved with refugee youth. I was thus able to visit six different settlement agencies and their affiliated programs.

All these agencies also filled out consent forms allowing me to speak to their staff about the educational status of refugee youth. I spent many hours with these individuals and agencies trying to understand their perspectives on the situation of the newcomer

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[5] There are many settlement agencies in Alberta. Some of these have been listed in Chapter One.

refugee youth. The meetings consisted of discussions on the educational aspects of the youth, students' experiences in the formal school systems and any other matters relating to the topic of being a young refugee. Notes were taken during these meetings, trying to capture all that was discussed.

I also volunteered my time with homework and cultural clubs, having to go through their formal processes of becoming a volunteer. Otherwise I would not be able to meet the youth for my study.

I have also been documenting my own thoughts, reflections in a journal and monitoring the progress of my own constructions as they have changed from the beginning to the end of the study. I have also shared these with a peer, who has assisted me with the analysis, findings and conclusions of the study. This is done in order to keep an open mind and allow changes to my own constructs as necessary.

Semi Structured Interviews

I also carried out semi structured interviews with refugee students themselves about their educational experiences in Alberta. This is the central part of the study, examining their experiences at the micro level, from their own perspectives. I developed a set of questions, along with probes in order to receive more pertinent information which can be later coded for analysis.

Four students were recruited through homework and cultural clubs run by the settlement agencies. I met two other candidates for my interviews through family workers at settlement agencies. One was found through a referral from another refugee student. Initially eight students had been selected and interviewed. During this process, I realized that one student came to Canada as an immigrant rather than a refugee. Thus his perspective has not been included in the analysis. I did not look for another student to replace him as time was running out. The school year end was nearing, school exams were ongoing and homework clubs were wrapping up for the summer. Thus the final study includes seven students. I had many challenges in the process of recruiting students.

In order to recruit students, I visited various homework and cultural clubs operated by settlement agencies. There I presented my study to the students and asked if anyone would be interested in participating. Students seldom came forward on their own. Thereafter I often spoke with them individually explaining the study again. Many students especially girls seemed shy and reluctant, saying "I am too shy to speak English". Other students seemed willing but their parents declined them permission as they seem to have felt that there may be some negative repercussions in taking part in this study, even though I explained to the students that confidentiality will be maintained. It was a very difficult task to find suitable candidates (i.e., students attending high school, having arrived in Canada as refugees since 2001 or later), and the youth workers assisted me by encouraging them to come forward. The final decision to participate, though, was the students and their parents, if they were under 18 years of age. At times, students accepted and I gave them the appropriate consent forms to fill out, and a date was set to collect these forms back before setting interview times but often they did not show up. The dates and places of the collection of consent forms were the homework clubs as I thought that this would be simple for both parties. I continued this process of selection until all participants were found.

I had difficulties acquiring subjects for my studies due to the lack of establishment of rapport and a lack of incentives. I was aware of the former one before I began recruiting students. Thus I spent many evenings and weekends at various homework or cultural clubs assisting students with their work in order to build rapport and friendships with them. However, many students would not attend these clubs regularly so then I would see some of them a few weeks later. I assisted all students who required help, despite their age, thus building relationships with Junior High students who were not eligible for the study. Nevertheless, the experiences of assisting younger students enabled me to develop an understanding that was not limited to high school students. The experience was also congruent with my theoretical framework which suggests that as part of an inductive approach one begins by observing and immersing oneself in the data.

The second drawback to acquiring subjects for my study was the lack of incentives. In my ethical review, I had mentioned that students will not be receiving any remuneration for their participation. I was not aware of the great impact these small rewards have on students. After interviewing a student and not giving any compensation for his time, I was criticized by a youth worker for my actions. This was despite the fact that I had offered twice to buy lunch or at least a soft drink for the student before we began the interview but he refused both times. I was told by the youth worker that this is the culture; that a person will refuse such offers but you just have to go ahead and give anyways. After that incident, I always spoke about some rewards for participants. From then on, I brought home made cookies or ice cream and gave them to students upon the end of the interviews. Many students saw the value of this study and said that they were very happy to be part of it as they hope that it will bring about change for future refugee students.

There were also many other limitations and assumptions made in recruiting students from homework and cultural clubs. One of the limitations of finding students through these clubs are that many did not attend these on a regular basis or at least visit the settlement agencies. They came whenever possible, perhaps having many other commitments. My assumption is also that they understood that their success in schools depended on the assistance given to them by volunteers and youth workers. I was not able to reach those who did not attend such clubs or agencies, except for one. I assume that there are many other refugee students in the city who do not participate in such clubs or visit settlement agencies. Another limitation is also that the ones who volunteered to be interviewed were those who felt comfortable in speaking English and did not feel threatened by the situation. Others who may not have strong English language skills could have participated in these interviews if translation services had been available.

Interviews took place between March and June 2007. As students agreed to be interviewed, a suitable time and place was agreed upon to meet for the interview. A variety of settings were chosen for this task from private homes, to the libraries and mosques. I also gave them the list of questions ahead of time, to relieve them of their

anxiety as well getting them to think about these questions before the interview. Before beginning the interview, all consent forms were checked for appropriate signatures, students were reassured of the confidentiality of their interviews. They were also given a demographic sheet to fill out pertaining to age, dates of arrival; countries lived in, languages spoken, religion and culture practiced etc... (See Appendix C)

All interviews were sound recorded using a built in microphone on the cassette player. All the students were asked the same questions, the probes varied depending on their initial answers. Mostly, though, probes were used to extract more details about their experiences, to enable them to provide richer data.

The difficult task of transcribing the interviews began soon after. Some interviews were very clear and audible. Others had some background noise of humming lights, or an echo thus making the tapes not very audible. Some students spoke clearly, others used a very quiet voice thus difficult to hear, some spoke very fast. I personally transcribed four out of the seven interviews, including the ones in French. Three were done by another individual who was paid for this work. Thereafter I confirmed these transcriptions for accuracy.

The interview transcriptions were given back to the students to ensure that their perceptions were actually captured in the transcriptions. They had the opportunity to change/ delete/ add to any part of the transcripts, providing the opportunity to ensure credibility of the data collected and credibility with the members being studied. It was difficult to meet with the students for subsequent meetings. Some cell phone numbers had changed. I was able to make further contact with five of the seven students who were able to examine their transcriptions. Only one student wanted a minor change on the transcriptions, that the pseudonym of her school name to be changed. The rest of the students felt comfortable with their transcriptions and did not raise any concerns over them.

To protect the identities of the students, and to err in the side of caution, thick descriptions of the students and places have not been provided. Thus much of the personal information of the participants has not been included in thesis for analysis.

Transferability, thus, may be not be possible however I feel that it is more ethical to protect the students' identities as it is a small sample of individuals.

Triangulation

Triangulation of data is an important aspect of showing research reliability. It involves "checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data" (Mertens, 1998, p.183). This study has used multiple sources of data: the literature review, the meetings with settlement agencies as well as the interviews of the students. The information obtained from administrators and the youth workers of the settlement agencies, the research literature as well as the students themselves show a degree of coherence. In fact, having spoken to all these individuals and reading through the literature on this topic, a saturation point was reached where all the information was the same, often repeated without any further extensions. The areas where students showed different perspectives than those found in the literature or information sessions with the agencies are noted in Chapters Three and Four, and are mostly due to the limitations of the study.

Research Limitations

My study is limited to interviewing students who were attending schools and homework clubs. I did not interview those that had left school prematurely (i.e. dropped out or pushed out) as I needed to ensure that my study was focused on the experiences of the students attending school.

The study is limited to seven high school students attending institutions within the three school boards in the city. Two students were chosen from Francophone schools, two from a Public school having a partnership with settlement agencies, one student with a Catholic school having a similar partnership with settlement agencies, two students from public schools without such partnership.

Perspectives in this study were obtained from the students refugee themselves and from various settlement agencies. The perspectives of teachers and administrators are not incorporated in this study.

I also chose to interview high school students in preference over elementary or junior high students as I felt they may be better able to express their thoughts due to their age.

Research Assumptions

I made several assumptions in my study. I have assumed that the students interviewed were interested in completing their education as they were attending schools and / or homework clubs at the time of the interviews. I also feel that the purpose of the study, my personal background of being a refugee as well as my ethnicity provided the students the confidence to relate to me on a personal basis. Students who agreed to be interviewed were those who felt comfortable conversing in either English or French. The participants felt confident for their safety and well being.

Data Analysis

Analysis Techniques

Data analysis began immediately after the completion of each interview, meeting or observation. "Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157). After each transcription and fieldnotes were completed and verified for accuracy, it was reviewed and sorted to search for occurrences of topics of people, events, times and forms of actions. This process gave me an intimate knowledge of the contents of the transcriptions and my fieldnotes. The data was then further coded, looking for occurrences of concepts, beliefs and themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). These were then used as coding categories as described by the students. An emic perspective was employed, that is using categories that were meaningful to the participants as opposed to an etic perspective where the data is analyzed according to the

categories of the researcher. This allows me, the researcher, to retain the substance of the interviews, fieldnotes and observations (Agar, 2007).

Analysis Format

Conformability is carried out as data is being analysed. Guba and Lincoln (1989) say that it is very important to trace the synthesis and conclusions made to the raw data, to the original sources in a logical fashion. A chain of evidence must be shown to explain logically how a certain conclusion was drawn out of raw data.

To achieve conformability, the initial task of the analysis of the research question is to channel the data into themes, which presents themselves through the commonalities of the information, recurring events and expressions. Many different themes emerge from the data, and students' thoughts, expressions and perspectives are classified under these codes. The analogy given by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) is pertinent here, to examine thousands of toys in a gymnasium and sort them according to different categories. I searched through my data for regularities and patterns in their thoughts as well as for the topics that my interview questions asked. I wrote down phrases and words to represent these topics and patterns. These were then made into categories. After a list of categories was developed, the data was mechanically, through the use of a computer, sorted into codes. No special sorting computer software was used, the data was physically separated through a 'cut and paste' method into the different codes ensuring that a copy of all the original transcriptions and fieldnotes were saved and backed up prior to this task. After the data was classified into codes, they were regrouped under major themes. These major themes were more general, encompassing a range of behaviours, attitudes and activities. From these major themes, corresponding sociological theories were retrieved. Theories have been expanded upon as the "Educational Processes of Schools" and "Externalist Accounts of Students" are analyzed and discussed. Students' school experiences are in the center of the study with viewpoints added from the sociological literature and settlement agencies to inform, support or disagree with such experiences. By way of delimitation one must remember, that these findings are from those students still

attending school, those who have not dropped out or been pushed out of school. The experiences of those who have left school prematurely are not reflected in this study.

Background Information

Description of Participants

All seven students interviewed arrived in Canada between the years 2001 and 2006. These youth range from ages sixteen to nineteen, and all attend large high schools operated by either the Public, Catholic or Francophone school systems in Alberta.

The students have come to Canada as refugees from war torn countries of Somalia, Burundi, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Eritrea. Many fled the violence in their heritage countries to live in either refugee camps, or urban areas in neighbouring countries (Kenya, Pakistan, New Guinea, and South Africa). Most of the students came directly to Alberta as government sponsored refugees, others were located in other Canadian provinces before migrating with their parents to Alberta in search of better economic and educational prospects. The four boys and three girls speak an array of languages including English, French, Kirundi, Zulu, Somali, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, Arabic, Amharic, Kriol, Limbah and Swahili. Their religions are Christianity (Protestant) and Islam.

The youth's school experiences before their arrival in Canada are varied. Alfie's[6] family spent a great deal of money in tuition fees ensuring that he attend an English medium school in Pakistan from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Similarly, Mary's family paid for a tutor to teach her sciences and math while she attended a private school in Kenya for about four years. Daniel and Brian attended an Arabic Islamic school where Brian completed his high school in Arabic whilst living in a Kenyan refugee camp. However, Daniel's parents sent him to a different school in the afternoons where he had the opportunity to learn English while still attending the Islamic school in the mornings.

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6 All the names used in this text are pseudonyms to protect the identities of all participants, schools and agencies.

On the other hand, Larry, Diane and Sam had interruptions in their education due to wars. Sam and Larry lost three years as they moved to South Africa where there was a change in the language medium of the school from French to English and the youth did not attend any educational setting during that time. Diana lost even more time in her education because her family was constantly moving to avoid violence. She remembers being in certain grades only. These students seem to have had more disruptions in their lives caused by wars and being displaced as refugees.

Brief Description of Schools and Students' Education Program

The high schools that the interviewees attend are large, educating six hundred to over two thousand students at the secondary level. More specifically, these schools offer an array of programs from English as a Second Language (ESL)[7] to English at Grade levels 10, 11 and 12, as well as at the International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement levels. They also offer various sciences, social studies, technology, other languages and optional courses. The medium of teaching is English, except the Francophone school where everything is taught in French. In order to graduate from high school, a student must complete 100 credits, including an English course at the Grade 12 level (English 30-1 or 30-2) and a number of mandatory courses at Grade levels 11 or 12 in Social Studies, Math, Science, CALM and Physical Education. One can also obtain a certificate of High School Achievement with a lower level of English and other core courses requirements (Alberta Education, 2007). Below is a description of the different English programs offered by the schools that the interviewees attended.

English Programs Including English as a Second Language

English is a course that is mandatory for all students to take if they wish to graduate and take post secondary education. English 30-1 is a prerequisite for entering university, and English 30-2 is a prerequisite for colleges and technical schools. Both of these courses are taught at the Grade 12 level, the two highest levels of English within the

[7] The English as a Second Language (ESL) program or students are also referred to as English Language Learning or English Language Learners (ELL).Both of these terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

mainstream program. There are also higher levels of English in high school for those students who take the International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement programs.

For a student entering high school at the Grade 10 level, he/she must navigate through different levels of English from Grade 10 through 12. Different level courses are offered through all the Grades, for example at Grade 10, English 10-1 is the highest level, followed by English 10-2 and English 14 which is lowest level. In Grade 11, English 20-1 is the highest level offered, followed by English 20-2, and English 24 which is the lowest level at Grade 11. Similarly in Grade 12, English 30-1, 30-2, 30-4 are offered, however English 30-1 or 30-2 are the only courses that can be used as requisites for high school graduation and post secondary education. A student can receive a Certificate of High School Achievement with English 20-2 or English 30-4 (by also completing all other requirements). Students must receive a passing mark at each course in order to move on to the next one.

If a student arrives in high school with an ESL designation[8], s/he must complete the four levels of ESL programming before entering the mainstream English courses described above. Depending on the proficiency of English that a student possesses, s/he is placed at the appropriate level of ESL programming (levels 1 to 4) which s/he works through to completion. It can take several terms or less to complete one level of ESL depending on the student's motivation, attendance, ability, etc.

The students who attend the Francophone school also have to take English. Both the students I interviewed seemed to be tracked to complete English 30-2 only. Larry had completed his and found it simple. He was ready with the English requisite to a technical school. The other Francophone student, Sam, was still in Grade 11 and had not taken the course as yet. It seems that English 30-1 was not an option offered to these students.

Alfie attends Gregory Dean High School (GD) which has a student population of over two thousand students, and has an ESL program from levels one to four. The school

[8] An ESL designation is given to a student who is born in Canada, or newly arrived to the country and is not fluent in the English language. (Alberta Education, 2003)

also offers a choice of mainstream and International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement core courses. Alfie began at Level Four of the ESL program and moved through different English courses to graduate with English 30-1, a prerequisite to university. He also sat for the English Provincial Achievement Test at the Grade 12. He took various other core courses necessary to graduate from high school and enter a post secondary institution to major in the Science program.

Mary attends Nancy Drew, a large high school that does not have an ESL program. It only offers a choice between mainstream and International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement programs for students to take as core courses. She is in Grade 11, taking the mainstream level for English and Social Studies courses and International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement courses in sciences.

Daniel and Brian's school, High Meadow, caters to over a thousand students and offers an English Second Language (ESL) program for newcomers, as well as mainstream core courses for all of its students. The ESL department is partnered with a community agency that enhances and supports ESL students further by providing homework and culture clubs after school hours. Daniel is in Grade 10, taking mainstream courses[9] in English, Math, Social Studies, and the Sciences while Brian just graduated from the ESL program, having worked through levels One to Four, into an English 14 course which he finds challenging. Brian also attends the mainstream program for his other core courses.

Diane attends Grand Oaks high school (GO) that has a student population of over one thousand five hundred students. The school also has an ESL program that is partnered with a community agency providing further support to newcomer students. It also offers an alternative program, Independent Learning, where students study independently at their own pace with support from teachers acting as advisors. Diane continues to work through the ESL program having completed Level 2, and takes other courses through the Independent Learning alternative program.

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[9] A mainstream course is a course of study that has not been modified for an ESL/ELL student.

Sam and Larry attend Capelli School (CS) that caters to over six hundred students. According to its website, it provides mainstream and enriched programs with an alternative program of individual study at Ajax. Sam and Larry are in Grade 11 and 12 respectively. Within this French medium school, they are enrolled at the mainstream level in all four core courses as well as an English course. The alternative program at Ajax also caters to the needs of many refugee students, including one of the students interviewed.

All of these students, with the exception of Alfie, also attend programs offered by settlement agencies, programs such as homework and cultural clubs offered after school or on weekends. Others are not involved in these programs but maintain some contact with settlement agencies. These agencies, their services and perspectives have already been described earlier in the literature review.

Conclusion

Qualitative in depth study was undertaken via a small sample of refugee high school students in order to understand their perceptions of their educational experiences inside and outside of school. This was carried out through semi structured interviews. Perspectives of the settlement agencies were also explored through meetings with significant individuals and informants working with refugee youth. The interactions at the macro and micro levels within the education system are briefly explained. Triangulation of the study occurs through the perceptions of the students, the perspectives of the settlement agencies as well as the literature review. Brief descriptions of the participants, as well as the background of the English program in the schools have been outlined to give the context under which the findings of the study are discussed. These findings are reported in the next two chapters.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis I

This chapter presents the data analysis of the interviews of seven students attending schools within the Public, Separate and Francophone school systems in a major urban center. These students speak about their experiences in schools as well as the support systems that enable them to do well academically. In order to provide a more holistic perspective the chapter lays out the narratives of the students and integrates the sociological literature and information from settlement agencies working with refugees in the city.

The findings are presented in two chapters: the Educational Processes of Schools as Chapter Three and the Externalist Accounts of Students as Chapter Four. The educational processes of schools are the internalist aspects of schools that are associated with the organization of schools in matters of selecting, categorizing students academically or otherwise. These aspects also relate to the formal curriculum with its assumptions of middle class cultural values, its covert transmission through the 'hidden curriculum' and teacher expectations resulting in 'self fulfilling' prophecies. The externalist accounts of students present the students' cultural capital, their support systems, and generally how students relate to schools and other individuals (Moore, 2004). An attempt has been made to separate these two approaches, however they cannot be fully separated as one approach influences the other and visa versa.

Educational Processes of School

The educational processes of schools emerge as one of the major theme under which many of the student narratives can be categorized. Moore (2004) explains these internal structures of the school as

... processes associated with the school that categorize, select and order pupils in terms of academic and other criteria. The focus is upon the school in term of features such as:

- the organization of the educational system in such a way that it may reflect and reproduce class or other divisions
- social biases in the formal curriculum such as the stereotypical representations of traditional gender roles or of white superiority or the assumption of middle-class values
- the covert transmission of such assumptions through the 'hidden curriculum' and teacher expectations resulting in a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' of success for some groups and failure by others
- the failure of schools to acknowledge and include certain kinds of cultural identities, especially in respect to ethnicity and sexuality. (p. 18)

Within this major theme of school processes, the following subthemes emerge in this study, Learning English, Learning English through an ELL program, disparity between different educational structures, support from teachers and other school personnel, program support and student expectations, age cap of twenty years, racialization issues, sports, extracurricular activities, school rules and discipline.

Learning English

All five Anglophone students found English to be the hardest subject to learn, whether they had some background in the English language or had little to no experience with the language. Generally when the students first joined a high school, those who had previous experience with English were integrated into the mainstream English courses, and those who had minimal to no prior knowledge of the language were admitted to the English Language Learning (ELL) program.

Five of these seven students interviewed attend Anglophone high schools. Mary, Daniel and Alfie who had learned some English in their heritage countries before coming

to Canada are presently (at the time of the interviews) in English 10-1, and English 30-1, while Brian and Diana who had little to no experience with the English language are in English 10-2 and ELL Level 3 respectively[10].

Daniel and Mary entered the school system at Grade 8 level and were integrated into the school's mainstream programming as they had some knowledge of English from their past education. They took their English Provincial Achievement Test in Grade 9, moved to high school and continued with English 10. Below are some of the comments from these two students in English 10, with Mary taking academically challenging courses in sciences.

> [My marks] were actually good, the only thing that I had a problem with English. It was really, really, hard for me so I had to read so many books, that was really hard...meaning that you had a hard time using the vocabularies, dealing with stuff 'cause it was hard, sometimes I would not understand if they used, like a very hard word, I wouldn't get it. My English wasn't the same as grade 8 student, though I understand everything. But still English is hard, it's very, very hard ....and the kind of vocabulary that they use, the kind of terms they use, I mean. They ask you what something is, and you don't even know, you know. It's like oh my god, I don't even know this, it's hard.
> (Mary; Lines 76 – 89; themes 6, 13; codes 6.1, 13.1[11])

> ... the only worry is English. Learning the language is first so they can,...if we know English well it would be easier to learn math, or science or social, so the basic thing was English ... what I was worried, English, I just have to work, like practicing speaking English 'cause I was, I could read and write English ... I just needed to practice English. I could understand what the teacher was saying,

[10] Explanations of these different levels of English were given earlier in the Background Information of the Methodology Chapter.

[11] A key to the theme and code numbers used can be found in Appendix A.

> and all that stuff... I was lucky to have went to school before. (Daniel; Lines 281 – 296; themes 6, 13; codes 6.1, 13.1)

Alfie entered high school in Grade 11, was admitted in ELL level 4, then weaved his way through the various levelled English courses to finally arrive at English 30-1 as a prerequisite for university. He considered himself very lucky in achieving English 30-1, and attributes his success to his background of learning English in Pakistan. He had just completed his Provincial Achievement Test for English 30-1, had to the following to say about English:

> Yeah, English was my struggle. In math I was okay, and other courses, Science, Social, Sciences, I was really good, only my struggle was in English. Because of the literature in English, it was hard for me. (Alfie; Lines 289 – 294; themes 6, 13; codes 6.1, 13.1)

Having learned English in their heritage countries was an advantage to these students. Thus, they are able to take the highest English course within each grade, and if all goes well they will be able to complete Grade 12 with the recommended English 30-1 as a prerequisite for university. They have also been successful in other courses, however have found English to be the most difficult course due to vocabulary and literature. For those students who did not have prior experience with English, the situation is very different.

Learning English Through an ELL Program

Alfie, Brian and Diana attended the ELL program in their respective high schools. Diana and Brian did not have any experience with an English language program before their arrival in Canada while Alfie had nine years in an English medium school in Pakistan. They were all admitted into the ELL program at different levels. Depending on the student's English proficiency, he/she attended ELL classes on a full time or part time basis while being enrolled in other ELL or mainstream core subjects. Below are these three students' reviews of the ELL programs in their respective high schools.

Alfie has attended both ELL and mainstream English courses. From his own experience of the ELL program and those of his friends in the same high school, he has strong thoughts about it. He felt that many students were not given the necessary skills to learn the language in ELL classes and much of time was being wasted in playing games. Alfie also indicated that learning to write, improving vocabulary were areas that students sometimes taught themselves as the pace in the ELL classes was too slow. He also felt that some students were proficient in English yet were not moved along the different levels, making them feel discouraged and frustrated. Below are some of his thoughts regarding ELL classes.

> I'd say ESL, I think the system is not as good as should be because the students who are like really good at English, they try to keep them there. I don't know why. When I was, at that time, I was struggling myself to get out of ESL because I wasn't learning anything in ESL ... my other friends were complaining about it because they said that they're doing nothing, just playing...my English was really weak. So that's why I was studying ESL doing nothing, learning nothing, so I was coming home working on vocabulary ... then writing skills, and stuff like that since we weren't doing that in ESL class, ... I was doing that by myself. And then after that, I finished level 4...
> (Alfie; Lines 304 – 352; themes 6, 13, 17; codes 6.2, 13.1, 17.2)

For Alfie, even though he had many years of English in Pakistan, he was admitted into the ELL program by the 'office people' because his spoken English was different from Canada. This shows that a proper assessment of his English language skills was not done prior to his admittance to the ELL program as even his ELL teacher felt that he did not belong there. The following example reveals the underlying basis for his placement and a stereotype that students who lack English are somehow deficient.

> ...And the teacher says from first day of ESL class, she knew that I know English, I'm not supposed to be in ESL level 4 but they still put me in that. The office people, they put me in ESL level 4 because I wasn't speaking

that good, but I was really writing good English, and reading good English. But my speaking wasn't good, and back home, because we were learning American English, American people speak a different way, and Canadian people, they speak different English. And then they thought that I don't know English, so that's why they put me in level 4...
(Alfie; Lines 354 – 359; theme 6; code 6.2)

Brian's experiences are similar but also different from those of Alfie's. Brian began his ELL studies at a junior high school with a daily one hour pull out for learning English, moved to high school and continued with his ELL programming there. He was also exempted from the English Provincial Achievement Test in Grade 9.

The problem is, when I came to Canada, English was the most problem thing that faced me. It was very difficult when you come..., you speak Somali, and all the people in the refugee camp they speak Somali. When I came to Canada, it's a totally different. Some of the language, the culture, and then when I go to high school, of course I speak English, and it was huge, huge problem for me.(Brian; Lines 202 – 206; themes 6, 13; codes 6.2, 13.2)

Brian was extremely happy when he made progress and graduated out of the ELL program and joined mainstream English courses. But his struggle with English was far from over.

...I started at level one, and then level two, and then level three, and then level four... Very happy. I'm very happy. There's students who ask me ... they stay here [in ESL classes] for four years, or five years, and I stay here two years, but I'm learning something more. So that's exciting. All my subjects right now, its all regular, not ESL anymore ... finally I am regular...you know, I'm not ESL anymore...
(Brian; Lines 311 – 346; theme 6; code 6.2)

His struggle with English continues. After two years in the ELL program, he has begun English 10-2 at age seventeen. He has until age twenty to complete English courses at grade 10, 11 and 12 levels to arrive at at least English 30-2 or 30-1 as prerequisites to post secondary education. Moreover, other core courses at varying grade levels have to be taken simultaneously with English in order to graduate with a high school diploma and enter a post secondary institution to take his chosen profession of nursing.

Diana has been in Alberta since November 2003 but has completed only two levels of ELL in four years. When she was interviewed, she was working through level three and was already eighteen years old. This leaves her only two years (until age twenty) to complete the remaining level of ELL and her mainstream English courses until English 30-2 to graduate with an English prerequisite for post secondary institution. Why is she taking so much longer to complete ELL than others have? She is one of the students who had large breaks in her formal education because of conflicts and wars in her heritage country. Her motivation level has been low due to personal problems.

> ...But next year I will be more focused because I was having problems in my life and I was not focused and not working that much. (Diana; Lines 459 – 460; theme 13; code 13.3)

In summary, the experiences of learning English and ELL in their high schools have been varied for the refugee students yet bear a common thread throughout. All of them have found this subject to be the most challenging at all levels. The students who were already in mainstream English courses had their own difficulties with literature and vocabulary. Those within the ELL program also struggled with inappropriate student assessment, low motivation and the slow speed of teaching and learning. There are also so many levels of English to complete until the final ones, English 30-1 and English 30-2 that are used as requisites for post secondary education. This struggle with the English language is in addition to passing other core courses needed as prerequisites for their chosen careers. Moreover, all these courses have to be completed by age twenty, as thereafter the students cannot attend their high schools anymore. Thus, successful completion of all courses within a certain time frame is a great necessity. Psychological

research in this area confirms the importance of learning the host language, Cole (1998) validates that successful students are those that have competencies in the mainstream language and academic skills. She also states that learning of the English language brings about adjustment of refugees to the new country, it is a bridge to socialization and opens up windows of opportunity for the students. The above discussion deals with learning English in Anglophone schools, however there are also many refugee students attending Francophone schools in the city. Their educational structure is different resulting in difficulties in other academic subjects. This is elaborated further in the next section.

Disparity Between Different Educational Structures

Disparities between the organizational structures of the different school boards often result in difficulties with academic subjects other than English. These difficulties in academic subjects were more evident when interviewing students in the Francophone school. It seems that the policy of the Francophone school board is that the student is registered and integrated in classes according to his/her age group regardless of the student's educational background. For example, Larry arrived in the city at the age of seventeen and was registered to take all Grade 12 courses in the Francophone school. However having missed at least three years of school due to wars, he did not feel ready to take Grade 12 courses. He felt he still needed the prerequisites of the lower courses before he could attempt the Grade 12 course curriculum. He was not given the opportunity to engage with the lower course material, in fact all the refugee students in the Francophone school have to contend with this policy making their academic progress difficult. Larry had to learn Physics 20 without having learned the lower levels of Physics or Science. The same policy is used for all the subjects offered in the school, giving the newcomer students a great disadvantage in his/her academic growth.

In contrast, students attending the other two Anglophone school boards (Public and Catholic boards) have been able to take courses at lower levels through ELL classes, and thereafter work through the higher levelled courses offered in the school. This has

given the Anglophone students a stronger base in their other core subjects and thus greater academic success.

At this point in time, francophone students are also expected to learn the material without extra help or pull outs. If they are having difficulties, they can ask for teacher assistance. If the teacher, however, feels that the student is not able to keep up with the pace and learning of the class, he/she is offered an alternative program, Ajax. This program allows the student to take courses through individual study without the benefit of classroom discussion, peer support or a teacher teaching the course. In the quotation below, Larry frustrations towards the education system are evident:

> …c est parce que j'ai fait trois ans sans étudier j'ai oublié beaucoup de chose. A présent, j'ai physique et biologie, ces cours que je prends maintenant je n'ai jamais dans ma vie. Je supposais commencer avec bio qui est à un niveau bas mais maintenant ils m'ont donné un bio qui a niveau terrible le bio 30, ce qui est en 12ème. Puis ils m'ont donné la physique 20 de 11ème, plus tout ca là je n'ai jamais fait. Pour le moment, c'est nouveau pour moi puis c'est pas facile, vraiment je me bas à mon maximum mais mon bio là, ca va pas du tout ca. Je n'ai pas des bonnes notes…Tu ne peux pas commencer de 5, il faut que tu commences à 1, 2, 3 tu peux partir d'un jusqu'a cinq, mais je comprends ce système il n'y a rien que je peux faire …(Larry; Lines 179 – 187; theme 13; code 13.1)

For those students who are not able to keep up with the pace of the class, an alternative program is available. This self directed learning program according to Larry and Sam (who attends the same school), is not only for those who are not able to cope with the pace and work of the classroom but it is also used when classrooms are overflowing. The students then also are sent there to complete their courses.

> comme si tu as un peu de difficulté dans tes cours en classe, aussi tu ne t'améliore bien, ou bien là bas il y a des cours qu'on te donne … c'est pour les gents qui ont la difficulté, même c'est pas seulement pour les gents qui ont les difficultés, si il n'y pas

assez, assez de places en classe, on peut même t'envoyer là bas, te donne le cours, tu le fasses là bas ...(Sam; Lines 280 – 285; theme 14; code 14.2)

...ils [students] ont des difficultés dans quelque cours, puis ils les amènent en Ajax. Comment ca va c'est comme ca, suppose que moi j'avais difficulté en math puis ils [teachers] me dit « ca va pas en classe, il faut ... en Ajax » puis là tu es seul ... (Larry; Lines 673 – 675; theme 14; code 14.2)

Larry refuses to participate in the alternative school program offered by Ajax as he feels it will not help him. The school has suggested that he use this alternative program. His reason is that in this self directed program, he knows that he will not do well. Larry feels that he needs to understand the material presented in the modules and he cannot do that in an individual, independent setting without someone actually teaching and discussing the ideas and information with him.

...moi aussi on voulait m'amener là bas pour que je veux faire science, je pas voulu, t'as pas de prof ... Moi je n'aime pas ca ... Moi ils [teachers] voulaient m'amener aussi que je vais là bas parce que moi je suis quelqu'un qui n'est pas facile à convaincre, moi j'aime discuter pourquoi il l'a vu la bas, pourquoi être pas ici et tout... comme à moi seul je ne pas motiver, c'est ca. (Larry; Lines 666 – 669; theme 14; code 14.2)

While discussing this alternative program further, I found out that the majority of students attending Ajax are Black with a few White students. When asked the reason behind this majority, Larry answered that Black students are having difficulty in school because they are not self motivated. This may be due to their lack of foundation in the academic subjects.

La plupart des gents qui vont à Ajax de je connais, je sais que la majorité qui vont en Ajax sont des noirs, ca c'est sure... il y

a des blancs qui vont là bas, mais la majorité qui vont en plus sont des noirs…(Larry; Lines 670 – 694; theme 14, code 14.2)

Encore pour que tu sois motiver, il faut que tu es quelqu'un qui peut te motiver, tu vas … comme seul, puis si tu manque la base tu es perdu, c'est comme ca. (Larry; Lines 993 – 994; theme 13; code 13.3)

Larry feels that many Black students in his school are not motivated to learn, are not interested in doing well in school. If they are not able to keep up with their class work because they have been assigned to an inappropriate level (usually higher than their level), it seems only natural that the students would not be interested in their academics. Moreover, the students interviewed did not speak about any other additional programs offered by Capelli School such as extra assistance, pull outs or homework clubs to assist students with their school work during or after school hours.

Moke Ngala (2005) confirms the above in his study that newly arrived francophone African refugees in Alberta face many academic and integration problems in their francophone schools. The schools do not have adequate resources to provide successful learning experiences for these youth. Many of them are failing. Furthermore, a settlement agency worker candidly discussed this issue of a large number of Black students at Ajax. His understanding is that these students are being streamed to a lower level of education at the alternative program in order to acquire a basic education so they may be employed in labour and menial jobs. The school is not taking the time and effort to educate the students so they may achieve a higher academic level. It seems that the school finds their gaps in education too difficult to deal with. The settlement agencies, also state that the francophone schools must provide a separate program allowing the refugee students to catch up on their learning and then join their age peers in their appropriate classes. At this point in time, the students are expected to learn the higher course material without any previous experience, assistance or pull out. These agencies feel that the francophone refugee youth are being set up for failure.

The Francophone refugee youth I interviewed are barely managing their course work. Larry refuses to attend the alternative program and spends many hours studying every night to achieve good grades.

> Ca c'est l'étape le plus difficile de ma vie, pour le moment,
> la classe de 12ème vraiment c'est l'étape difficile de ma vie.
> Je suis vraiment, vraiment, vraiment stressé pour le moment…
> Comme j'ai assez perdu du temps puis il faut vraiment que je me
> bats fort, Moi qui me sacrifice, qui dors à une heure du soir,
> chaque jour que j'étudie puis je couche à une heure…et
> moi je ne travaille pas… (Larry; Lines 704 – 721; theme 13, code 13.1)

Sam has at times taken some courses through Ajax and then returned to the mainstream program in the school to continue her education.

Furthermore, post secondary education for the Francophone refugee youth seems to hold another hurdle. Most of the colleges in the city offer programs in English, thus these students may have to upgrade their English language skills before being admitted to a career program of their choice. For those Francophone refugee students who manage to achieve high school graduation, further upgrading in English Language skills can undertaken at public schools before the age of twenty or at local colleges after age twenty.

Moreover, community agencies also argue that the Eurocentric curriculum taught in Alberta schools is not helpful. Students, whether in Anglophone or Francophone schools, are not able to comprehend the context within which lessons are taught. They have a difficult time relating to the examples and questions in the classrooms or textbooks. Using a deck of cards for math exercises is difficult for some students because some cultures do not play cards. Using examples of northern animals such as Canadian geese or polar bears is harder to understand than the use of a savannah with tigers and impalas. There is a great lack of examples in their textbooks from other cultures that are more familiar to them. The histories of non western nations are not discussed, often belittling their cultures and their people. Other subjects, such as Social Studies, are even

more difficult as they are directly related to the Canadian and European ways of life which are foreign for many newcomers.

The students in my research, however, did not speak about the difficulties of a Eurocentric curriculum in their interviews. There was, however, no specific interview questions pertaining to this subject. Yet with my own experience of assisting refugee students in several homework club settings, there were math questions related to calculating areas and perimeters of a hockey rink, and the areas within the crease lines of a hockey rink. I personally had difficulty understanding exactly what a crease line was in a hockey rink, yet a student who barely knows the English language or Canadian culture was expected to answer these questions on a test. Other students were struggling with health and safety questions about the use of safety equipment such as steel toe shoes, hard hats and use of machinery at a work site. Some of these students were not familiar with these words and concepts and did not have the English language to communicate their understandings or difficulties with me. So their lack of success in these subjects can be understood more as lack of language or experience but not as lack of abilities.

The research literature on refugee students reflects the above difficulties. Cole (1998) and Cummins (1994) imply that there is an overrepresentation of minority students in non academic streams who are being mislabelled as underachievers. To reduce such over representation, they suggest that the areas of school development to assist refugee students are performance based assessments and culturally fair tests. They also advocate for comprehensive psychological testing which will show that students with learning gaps are not necessarily special needs.

From the above findings from interviews, community agencies and research literature, one can interpret that the processes (Moore, 2004) of the school (its organization, bias of the formal curriculum, middle class norms and values ...) see these refugee students as deficient in their learning and are thus provided with a lower standard of education. In this context, the students are expected to fit into the mould and norms of a white middle class society and be able to continue their education within the cultural values of this society. When students are not able to fit into such a mould for a variety of

reasons, they are considered as being culturally or socially deprived or deficient creating social differences in education which in turn lead to class and labour divisions (Moore, 2004)

In summary, Francophone refugee students are having difficulties in school with their academic subjects due to the processes and organization of the school that is inappropriate placement of students, the lack of assistance or extra help after school hours. Many of them have been streamed to a lower academic alternative program. Those who continue with the mainstream program spend many hours studying and struggle through their coursework. All refugee students, whether attending Francophone or Anglophone schools, seem to have difficulty with the Eurocentric curriculum as well, and are all in need of extra support from their schools. This support has at times come from teachers and other school personnel, but has often been greatly lacking. The next section covers this topic in greater details.

Support from Teachers and Other School Personnel

Despite the limitations of my study discussed in Chapter Two, some students are succeeding. The students who were interviewed identified a variety of factors that promoted success at school, and yet many of these same factors produced difficulties for others. One such category is the support, or the lack thereof, of teachers and other school personnel. Teachers, counsellors and principals make up the back bone of any school having both positive and negative influences on all students. In the case of the refugee student, this influence can alter the future of the individual as he/she struggles through a variety of problems, beyond the school environment, simply to adjust to the new country. This section is about the refugee students' views of their teachers and other school personnel. Some of these individuals have offered outstanding support to the students while others have only presented negative outlooks towards them.

Some personnel have had positive influence on refugee youth. Alfie's English teacher spent many hours after school helping him overcome his difficulties in his English course. The teacher coached Alfie personally on his weaknesses, giving him vocabulary to study, teaching him how to read a story and answer multiple choice

questions. This assistance was specific to his needs. Mary, another successful student felt that her teachers were always available after school to assist her. Her English teacher was aware of her ELL background and encouraged her to continue with the higher levels of English courses. Daniel also felt that his teachers were always welcoming him after school when he needed help.

> ...they are always there to help you ... anytime you need help, like after school, or...at lunchtime you can always go there and talk to them, ...they're friendly people...they say, come after school and we'll help you with (Daniel; Lines 383 – 386; theme 20, code 20.1)

> So they are helpful...I have a math question or a science question they tell me how I can improve it, how I can study. An example my English teacher I told her about my problem with ESL, she come and talk to me. I see your multiple choice, you are in ESL level but still I think you can go to 30, you can go to anywhere. It's not about the mark, it's about how you work hard and try to improve it.(Mary; Lines 370 – 378; theme 20; code 20.1)

> yeh like the teachers help too, especially like Ms. S. She's been really good, you know as a teacher she helped me lots, you know. (Diana; Lines 389 – 390; themes 20, 12; codes 20.1, 12.2)

> ... the teachers are really nice. They have, like, really good teachers, and then they're really helpful, ... the teacher and the staff, everybody's really good. (Alfie; Lines 443 – 444; theme 20; code 20.1)

Diana was very pleased with her school principal for emphasising that all students are equal regardless of their race, religion or language. He had mentioned this several times in the school theatre during general assemblies.

> ... and the principal trying to tell the students that everybody should be treated like the same, right. Like we're from the same country. Everybody should be equal with everybody,

respect, friends, you are a student ... and you should respect everyone... he would say that in the theatre when there is an assembly in the school.
(Diana; Lines 122 – 127; themes 20, 12; codes 20.1, 12.2)

Alfie also received some support from his counsellor only in determining if he needed more credits to complete his high school diploma requirements.

I went there once, like, for they made some mistake in my credits. I took summer school courses, they never added the credit to my credits because you need 100 credits in order to graduate. So I went to her, talked to her once ... and she apologized for that, and she added my credits to that. And I went to her a second time, for getting advice about what do I need, like, so I don't get stuck at the end of year that I'm not graduating... She told me, even though I knew what should I take, but I still went to her because she knows better than me...she look at all my courses that I took, she said you should be okay, and that's all. Just because of my education, I mean, my high school diploma requirements...I went to her twice.
(Alfie; Lines 741 – 750; theme 20; code 20.1)

Larry had a greater amount of support from the school counsellor/social worker due to his needs. She set him up for student financing and assisted him in choosing a career. He originally wanted to become a pilot but this career is very expensive as the student requires many hours of flying experience which can cost thousands of dollars. Instead the counsellor/social worker set him for a career in Auto Mechanics at a local college. Larry was also invited out for a meal by his counsellor as well as received Christmas gifts from other school personnel. Larry attributes these gestures of kindness to his polite and good manners, and in winning the staff's confidence.

…puis il m'a demandé qu'est ce tu voulais avoir comme au Noel, je voudrais avoir un T shirt, puis un hat, si vous voulez,

puis après quand j'ai eu ces cadeaux et tout, je sais qui m'a
donné ces cadeaux, j'ai mal ce n'était pas le professeur, c'était
la directrice en joint qui m'a fait cadeau, comme c'était Madame D.
puis elle m'enseigne même pas. (Larry; Lines 494 – 497; theme 20; code 20.1)

Even though teachers assist students in their learning as mentioned above, other teachers have made it more difficult for the students to learn and feel comfortable in schools. A major difficulty students face in schools is the lack of supportive teachers who can make them feel comfortable, who have high expectations of them and actually take the time to assist them.

Program Support and Teacher Expectations

Some students have felt that there is lack of support in the classroom, especially with ELL students in their mainstream English program. They feel that little assistance is available from the teachers while they are struggling with their courses. Moreover there are lower expectations for ELL students who are not encouraged to strive and succeed. This continues the 'self fulfilling prophecy' of success for some groups and failures by others. 'Self fulfilling prophecy' has been defined as "the notion that the assumptions and expectations that teachers and other service workers hold about students can influence students' lives and futures" (Wotherspoon, 2004, p. 51). Teachers can create and apply labels to students and their parents on the basis of common-sense assumptions, background information and observations that can influence future educational, career and social paths of the students.

One student awarded teachers from public schools more accolades than teachers from the catholic school board. Mary has attended both school systems and has found that teachers from public schools are more welcoming, less judgmental, and more helpful.

...Sun Valley teachers (a public school), they are more, like they
want you to be there. They tell you you're important that you
have to be somebody but unlike Campbells (Catholic school)

just like you're there for the sake of being there. No one really cared, I felt like no one cared about us or me."
(Mary; Lines 112 – 114; theme 20; code 20.2)

Brian, having made a transition from ELL into a regular English class, was very disappointed in his teachers. He remembered his ELL teachers and how they were so helpful to him, compared to this past semester when he had terrible teachers.

> Different teachers, yeah. I like my old teachers ... I don't like this semester because ...I just don't like them [the teachers]. Mostly they don't help me, they don't, I don't like them. So, they just give me a little bit time. You know, everybody's so good, they born in here, most of, most of them in Canada, and ... I was here only two years, you know, and it's a regular, Science 24, Math 24, English 10-2, you know...there's no ESL, you know...you get this thick book, and ...most of them, I understand most of them in English, but they say a lot of words that's very, I find it very difficult.
> (Brian; Lines 401 – 456; theme 20; code 20.2)

The reason Brian does not like his teachers is that he does not obtain any assistance from them. Even though he has completed the ELL program and has begun the regular English program, he is still having difficulties in his reading and comprehension. The assistance from the teachers is minimal making him very frustrated.

> I...do tell them [that I need help], but they say always, yeah, we're going to help you if you need help, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know. The yeah, yeah, if you, if you use that word, it's just, they don't want to help you.
> (Brian; Lines 475 – 476; theme 20; code 20.2)

Many teachers also have lower expectations of their ELL students, not assisting or expecting them to excel, and it was noted by Daniel who explained what may be happening to his friend Brian.

> They, there are different teachers, so there are some teachers like they expect you just, because he's from ESL classes, right, so they expect him not to do so good. They're like, ... I think some of them are racist ...I did hear some, there's other kids in the class that don't like the teacher's ideas, too. So I think the problem is the teachers. (Daniel; Lines 485 – 528; theme 20; codes 20.3, 20.4)

Alfie talks about the teachers in the ELL program. He feels that there are not enough teachers in that program, there is one to assist in the reading and writing and another to teach other core subjects, thus students are not receiving the necessary assistance.

> ...some of my friends, they complain about ESL teachers, too, and they said, they can't learn anything. ... Some students are really need to struggle with it because the teachers they don't help. We have, like, two teachers for ESL classes. One teacher is...helping them with their readings and writings, and the other teacher is helping them with their writings, and teaching them, like ESL Social, ESL English 10-2, two programs, and two teachers. And overall, like, I have no complaints from my school ... after I got out of the ESL class ... (Alfie; Lines 587 – 593; theme 20; code 20.21)

Students also have to contend with the lack of support within the school. For example students complete satisfaction surveys annually for the administration to measure the effectiveness of the school, yet the process of ameliorating the ELL program is not included in that survey. Alfie remembers filling out a satisfaction survey from the school recently. He mentions that there are no questions on how to improve the ELL program. He would have suggested implementing an assessment to determine students' proficiency in the English language rather than just assume that they are deficient. This is what he had to say,

> In my school we had a survey; we had a survey for each student to tick mark if they were satisfied with what program the school offers. But I couldn't see anything that I could change, but there

wasn't anything about ESL, ... if I was the principal, would have changed the system of the ESL classes because the first when the students go, they should write a test, but there are some people that they don't write a test, they just transfer them to the level one even though they know very good English. (Alfie; Lines 640 – 645; themes 4, 6; codes 4.1, 6.2)

When students were asked if they were being treated differently because of their refugee status, or if their needs were being recognized, most of them replied that refugee and ELL students are often regarded negatively by teachers and students as they are seen to be unintelligent. Only Alfie felt that being treated differently had a positive outcome for him. This was because one of his English teachers taught and catered to his needs. All other ELL students felt that they were considered 'dumb' and that the teachers had lower expectations of them. When the students approached the teachers to find out why they received a low mark, they were told not to worry. They are told it is okay to get a lower mark because they are ELL, rather than encouraging and teaching them further.

...when you are ESL, you can't go and communicate with the other person, like your English is weak, they think that you are kind of dumb, honestly, 'cause you, you don't have, you don't know the English... (Brian; Lines 562 – 564; theme 21; code 21.1)

I think ... because they [the students] are coming from ESL, they[the teachers] think they're not good enough for the class, like they don't expect you to get high marks...if they give you a mark, like, say 50%, and you go talk to them, and you say, why do I get this? They will say, its okay, you are in ESL, I know you're ESL, and I know you are still learning English so its okay, instead of encouraging, you say that you should do better, and, and you should do better in this, but they'll its okay, I know you, you come from ESL... To other ESL students that were in my

class, they will say to you, you're in ESL, its okay to get a low mark.
(Daniel; Lines 607 – 625; themes 20, 21; codes 20.3, 21.1)

Refugee students who are also ELL feel that their weakness in the English language is interfering with people's perceptions toward them. They are being considered less smart and less capable of higher achievement. This can bring about resentment and anger in the students.

The research literature substantiates the above findings. Derwing et al. (1999) found that there is a failure by teachers to recognize linguistic differences between students and the educational gaps they may have in their learning. Cummins argues that the present school system discriminates against ELL students by its lack of adaptation in accommodating them (Cummins 1994). The research also suggests many areas of improvement are required to bring more success to refugee students, many of whom are also ELL students. Derwing et al. (1999), in their study of Alberta schools, found that both ESL students and teachers feel that ESL classes have a negative stigma attached to them. Both students and staff feel that they are not treated with dignity, that students not regarded as smart and teachers perceived as babysitters. Derwing et al (1999) confirm that ELL students face a number of challenges in schools such as uneven power relationships between ELL and Native English speaking students as well as teachers leading to the ELL students' marginalization. There is often a lack of support from staff and administration over ELL issues, including support inside the classrooms. This was clearly observed through Brian's and other students' perspectives that found their English courses difficult and did not receive the extra assistance required to succeed in their English classes. And with Alfie's teacher holding high expectations for his student provided Alfie the incentive to do well and succeed. Derwing et al. (1999) and Watt & Roessingh (2001) both advocate for better ELL instructional services. Unfortunately, funding for ELL programming is dependent on political forces that sway between fiscal restraints and reinvestment in education. It is not based on students' needs.

Watt & Roessingh (2001) also state that a good indication of success in schools has been the students' educational background before entering high schools as well as

English language proficiency upon entry into high schools. This has been illustrated, especially, by Alfie as well as Mary and Daniel. Their past English education has facilitated their success in Canadian schools.

From my conversations with settlement agencies, they also concur with these findings. They find that teachers treat refugee students as any other ELL student, not recognizing that their life experiences are different. There is a lack of classroom support to assist refugee students. Schools and teachers are not taking advantage of the services of cultural brokers that settlement agencies provide to assist teachers in their communication with students and parents. Another concern identified by settlement agencies is that there is a major problem of streaming refugee youth into non academic subjects, especially into lower levels of English. They feel this is done despite the potential that students show in other subjects. Agencies perceive that regular classroom teachers are unwilling to work with ELL students because they do not have the extra time that the students require. There are also a large number of ELL students in a classroom with only one teacher, reducing the individual attention required by the students. This was also observed by Alfie who felt that there were not enough teachers in the ELL program, and by Brian and Daniel who articulated that little time was given to ELL students in their regular mainstream classes.

To make matters worse, the settlement agencies feel that the schools are not recognizing that there is a problem in the education of refugee youth and they lack the initiatives in making changes. The schools insist that they are the experts in their field and do not require help from anyone; however agencies see that schools operate from crisis intervention rather than prevention by not recognizing student needs. This crisis intervention method and lack of forward thinking has lead to major problems in the schools. One such problem is the lack of recognition for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which 50% (Cole, 1998; Marotta, 2005) of refugee children students suffer from.

Even though my interviewees did not speak about any PTSD, the literature on refugee youth and the experience of settlement agencies both argue that this disorder is prevalent among refugee youth. It disrupts student learning and often streams them into

special needs, lower academic classes or expelled from schools. Many of the students suffer from depression or have difficulties adjusting to the new ways of life (Cole, 1998; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Morotta, 2005). The children often feel alienated from their teachers and peers, resulting in further difficulties. Unfortunately this is often not recognized by the school, and students are not given the necessary counselling to overcome these challenges.

The lack of program support, the low expectations from teachers and the lack of recognition of refugee student needs all bring about negative experiences towards the school and lower performance by refugee students. These are compounded by racialized attitudes and discussions from some teachers that refugee students have witnessed. These are discussed in the next section.

Racialization Issues

Racialization is a term that has been widely used in the discussions of race and racial issues. Murji and Solomos (2005) define racialization as "...describing the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues – often treated as social problems- and with the manner in which race appears to be a, or often the, key factor in which they are defined or understood" (p.3). In the words of Collins (2000) "Racialization involves attaching racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (p.75). In other words, racialization is to perceive or experience things in a racial context, to impose a racial interpretation to events or things.

Some students who were interviewed experienced racism from their teachers. These teachers made comments about different races making students feel uncomfortable. Others demonstrated lower expectations from certain racialized students, again allowing the 'self fulfilling' prophecy to flourish with successes for some and failures for others.

Mary has experienced a lot of racism in one of the Junior high schools she attended when she first arrived in this city. Campbell school has ELL programming for students from Kindergarten to grade nine with a large population of Black African

students studying there. This school was discussed earlier in this chapter as a school lacking teacher support. She found the teachers in this school to be very racist and discriminatory, not sympathetic to Black people. She finally ended up moving to a public school, Sun Valley. Some of her comments have been:

> ...basically his name is Mr. X, he is a very bad teacher. I think he hated black people... I mean most of the teachers were like that [saying negative things about black people]. Yes, most of the teachers were like that. The teachers made me uncomfortable...They were just mean ...They were this time when they called me nigger, so. (Mary; Lines 551 – 565; theme 5; code 5.1)

In one of Mary's International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement class, a class discussion moved to the lack of black people in International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement classes. Mary, being an African, is fair skinned, and can easily pass for a non African. She listened to this discussion quietly wanting to know where it would lead.

> the teacher [in my IB/AP class] actually was talking about, I don't think he was being racist, but like he wondered he saw so there was no black person thinking I was an Indian person...we were talking about Two Pac, talking about him. All of a sudden, I don't know, they got really racist so they were. I don't remember specifically but it got to a point where it's like, no African person, black person takes IB/AP....well, no I didn't say [that I was Black], I wanted to know, I was so curious that I wanted to know why he was actually going to say, it kind a continued then after a while it ...Even I say to my sister, I say to my family it's like if you're a black person and I take the IB/AP example ... There's a big issue that people actually consider us to be dumb. They actually consider us to be dumb. There was this time they were like 'Oh my god most of the black people are rappers so like obviously they have nothing to do'.... They're good in music because they're not good in school, that was the kind of conversation

> that was going on, and I'm just like don't you dare to be racist to me again. I was really mad and that's the kind of stuff that goes on. I mean still, I am not going to say there is no racism in Nancy Drew because I know there is but people wouldn't say because they'll be judged around, like they will be judged, people around them ...
> (Mary; Lines 572 – 594; theme 5, code 5.1)

Diana has experienced incidences, in Grand Oaks School, where she has not been given opportunities by her Music teacher to perform. She has been in his program for about two years and has often expressed her wish to perform. The teacher has given others a chance but Diana has still not received her opportunity. She is questioning whether that is racism or not. When she asks about her turn, she is always turned down, her teacher citing that so and so is performing today, and Diana ends up sitting again.

> ...my music teacher, Mr. Z., because ... I wanted to do something, but he's always been like no this girl doing it or something
> ...so after I sit you know ... I have been there in the Music like almost two years now so,...I always wanted to sing so but he does not like... I don't know [it is racism] but I think that was pretty unfair
> (Diana; Lines 349 – 356; theme 5; code 5.1)

As quoted earlier, Brian and Daniel have mentioned that they find some teachers in their high school to be racist in terms of academic expectations. Overall though, the rest of the students found that the teachers do not discriminate against the students. As Larry stated poignantly, he does not see racism in schools unless it is hidden.

> pas moi non, j'ai vu jamais. Comme je l'ai dit à moins qu'il fait en caché mais combien de gents qu'il t'haïr mais ils ne montrent pas comme [dans] la classe.
> (Larry; Lines 581 – 582; theme 5; codes 5.1, 5.2)

In addition to the above revelations, one can add the high number of Black students in the Ajax alternative program offered by Capelli School, discussed earlier on in this chapter,

as a racialized issue. There seems to be a greater indication that Black students are dealing with a vast amount of racial profiling than other races. This has been shown by most of the students interviewed. All these youth are visibly darker with the exception of Mary and Alfie who are lighter skinned. Even then, Mary has had her share of experiences. Dei et al. (1997) also confirm that differential treatment by teachers based on race occur in Canadian schools and are often alienating and discouraging Black youth from scholarly achievement. According to Dei (2006) and Kelly (2006), systemic racism is rooted within the education systems, especially with the neoliberal discourses of students achieving "excellence" and students "at risk". These designations rely heavily on 'norm referenced' tests designed and developed with reference to the majority of the students that are of middle class Anglo Saxon culture.

Despite these challenges, the youth have shown resiliency to the system and organization of the schools. The processes of education continue to sort individuals out, not only through streaming and negative differentiation but also with age. The Alberta Government has an age cap of twenty years for students to complete and graduate from high school. This is discussed further in the next section.

Age Cap of Twenty Years

Alberta Education has a policy that students must complete their high school by age twenty. If this does not occur, the student can continue upgrading at a local college provided they have not attended an education program for twelve consecutive months (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2008). Fortunately there have been recent changes whereby the twelve consecutive months can be accounted for throughout a person's life, not just after high school ("What's Up with the One Year Gap" Seminar, April 2008).

All the students interviewed in this study anticipated that they will be able to graduate by age twenty and will not be pushed out of high school. The exception is Diana who has realized that she will not be able to complete high school by age twenty and will have to go for some upgrading at a local college sometime in the future. She continues to

work at a local coffee shop to save money, gain Canadian experience, more specifically gain experience in running a business as she sees her future in it.

> Yah, I have to go college so for upgrading, 'cause I am working at a coffee shop right now. I want to work there for like a long time, get my experience in the business, Canadian. Then I get to know, have experience, then I'll like to go back to college or university. I have to upgrading a lot, then I can work, get more experience in the business and save some money...
> (Diana; Lines 184 – 187; theme 1; code 1.1)

I also find that Brian may be short of time in completing his high school and English 30-2 as he is already seventeen years of age. He will need to use his time well to complete all necessary courses to graduate and enrol in a nursing program at a local college. It would be important to connect with these students again in a couple of years to see what they have managed to achieve in school as some seem to be at risk of being pushed out. They may also drop out if they feel discouraged and disenchanted, that their efforts have not yielded the required results. Research (Derwing et al., 1999) shows that 10% of ESL students are pushed out of high school due to the Alberta Education's policy of completing high school by the age of twenty.

Further substantiation of this point was given at a youth network forum conducted in Edmonton on May 23, 2007 by the Canadian Council of Refugees. Its purpose was to bring the refugee youth together to discuss their problems and challenges, and together search for possible solutions. A large number of youth identified the policy of age cap of twenty years to be of great concern. The policy is perceived by students as a gatekeeper preventing them from achieving post secondary education, better employment, better economic prospects and finally alleviation from poverty.

As can be seen from the interview data, most students can complete their high school studies by the required age. Diana is aware that she lacks the time to complete high school and will need to upgrade in the future. I hope that the thought of 'going back

to school' as an adult does not discourage her. If she continues her life as an individual 'pushed out of high school', her chances for better employment will be limited.

Despite the various obstacles, students continue to show their motivation in completing high school. Some have found success in schools through other means. One such form is through sports. This is discussed further in the next section.

Sports

Organized sports in schools have been an equalizer for many students. They play together regardless of their background and work together for a common goal of team victory. It has brought them self esteem with a sense of accomplishment and camaraderie which is not necessarily seen in the rest of the school.

With all the boys who were interviewed, sports, specifically playing soccer, have been the highlight of their positive experience in school. They look forward to coming to school, meeting their friends and playing together. It has also given them a sense of ownership and loyalty to the school. From Alfie who has been successful academically to Brian who struggles with his courses, all of them feel that sports make a great difference in their commitment to school.

> I like best of all my school that they have every kind of sports you can participate, that you can get trained by the teachers, and that you can ... get involved in those sports, ... like in playing soccer for the GD, GD junior soccer team,... GD senior soccer team, basketball, and baseball and curling, they have all those things, they have really good. (Alfie; Lines 426 – 429; theme 12; code 12.1)

> But school's fun, and the best thing that I do is I'm a captain soccer right now, and ... soccer is fun, so I like the soccer to enjoy it, you know, yeah. (Brian; Lines 394 – 395; theme 12; code 12.1)

Larry has also found success through sports. His athletic abilities have won him recognition amongst his peers and school faculty. He has found that his classmates are willing to help him out more in his academics as well as the teachers treat him with more dignity and respect. His abilities have assisted him in becoming more integrated and successful in school.

> …mais enfin à mesure je progresse comme ce n'est pas comme avant, comme maintenant j'entre en classe, je fais des jokes, je parle … comme maintenant dans tous mes classes, tout le monde me connait. Mais enfin moi j'ai l'avantage que je suis dans un sport, car je fais bien à soccer, je fais bien à basket. Il y a des gents qui viennent me voir jouer, ils me disent « man, tu joues bien, tu joues bien » puis là, cela commence la conversation…puis quand j ai commencé à côtoyer des gars, c'est quand j ai commencé comme enfait à participer des sports. Mais à part ca, si il n y avait pas une équipe de basket ou de soccer, je ne croix pas j'aurais des amis garçons là…. puis maintenant c'est ceux [les garçons] qui m'aident, maintenant à l'école pour moment je peux vous dire je connais très bien avec tous les profs. Comme dernièrement, à Noël comme il y a des profs qui m'ont donné cadeaux, les profs qui ne m'enseigne même pas. (Larry; Lines 345 – 491; themes 12, 13; codes 12.1, 12.2, 13.2)

Individuals who are not endowed with athletic abilities may often find that participating in sports can exclude them further from their team or peers. However, in this case, playing sports is an optional activity allowing those with athletic abilities to become involved and show their strengths to their peers. It also enables them to build friendships on the basis of strengths not weaknesses.

The three girls who were interviewed were not involved in any sports. Diana is involved in a dance group outside of school. All three girls have been involved in some extra curricular activities in the school which is discussed below.

Extra Curricular Activities

I asked the students questions about their involvement in school activities other than courses to gauge their comfort level in their school, their feelings of belonging and ownership of the school. Most of them felt that they were too busy with course work, focused on their studies that it did not leave them enough time to become involved in other activities. They enjoyed watching, sometimes participating in events in the school that were organized by the Student's Union, such as Valentine's Day, Pyjama Day, multicultural days, etc. Mary and Diana became involved in baking cookies for one of these special events, such as Multicultural Day. Diana also participated in an African dance at school a couple of years back.

> yes I did get involved, though I did not dance or do anything,
> I get involved... I sold cookies, I danced with them...
> (Mary; Lines 182 – 184; theme 7; code 7.1)

However none of the students felt that they can become one of the organisers, they just did not have the time.

> I don't do sports, as it is I'm really busy so I don't do sports.
> I have a lot to do (Mary; Lines 345; theme 7; code 7.2)

Alfie, had absolutely no time for such activities, he assisted in setting up the gym once for an event only because it was a requirement from his Physical Education teacher. All students had to participate in this specific activity for credit purposes, and so he did. Otherwise, he says he has no time!

> ...I used to be involved in my second year in soccer team because
> then we were playing soccer at school, I was good at soccer. And
> [now] that's it, no nothing, [I don't play] any kind of sports because
> for Canadian students it was easy to get involved in sports since
> they had, like, only courses, and then we, ...like people ...who were
> refugees, they were starting to struggle with their school courses ...

> new environment, new culture, new people .... I am focusing on my studies... (Alfie; Lines 464 – 472; themes 7, 13; codes 7.2, 13.1, 13.2)

Sam felt that she did not know enough about the procedures of being elected in the Student Union, or how to become involved in organizing events as she would love to coordinate and arrange for different occasions. She felt that since it was her first year in the school, she needed to familiarize herself with the system and then would try to become more involved next year.

> …quand on a commencé ca, moi je n'étais pas courant, puis mais maintenant comme je … travaille comme, je vais les organiser pour l'année prochaine…et jouer le basketball …
> (Sam; Lines 244 – 248; theme 7; code 7.3)

Brian and Daniel are involved in school sports (soccer) and lunch time intramurals with their friends, as well as in leadership, social justice and cultural clubs within their school. They have been highly encouraged to participate in a variety of clubs by the settlement agency worker associated with the school. Many refugee youth are involved in the same clubs, not only offering support to one another but also participating in clubs that are relevant to them. Global social justice issues are discussed through video conferencing with youth from around the world. The refugee youth are able to understand and make better meaning of these issues from their own lived experiences. Likewise, the culture clubs are relevant to them as they are presently living through two different cultures and need space and time to discuss their various issues of concern.

> ...I am in the culture club, the leadership, and social justice. We just talk about ways to help other people, like ...change the world, make a difference, and we did like a culture day in our school. We did ...a video conference like for ... like eight countries or so, watching from all over the world, helping building a school in A., and other things, the environmental things, yeah...
> (Daniel; Lines 371 – 378; theme 7; code 7.1)

> Yeah, we have intramurals, most of my teammates are Somali. There are actually non Somalis too. But the other sports, like at school teams, these are all different kinds, all different kind of cultures. (Daniel; Lines 1344 – 1345; theme 7; code 7.1)

> Leadership, leadership club, video conference that happen in the school, soccer programs, culture club, social justice, so, yeah. I enjoy them, yeah, they are really good. (Brian; Lines 726 – 731; theme 7; code 7.1)

It is interesting to note that students from other high schools are not as involved in extracurricular activities as the two from High Meadow HS. High Meadow School has a partnership with a settlement agency. The school provides a space for the agency to carry out homework and cultural clubs after hours. Many of the refugee students who attend these clubs are further encouraged to become involved in school activities. This school/ agency partnership allows the refugee students opportunities to become involved in organising larger events that have greater meaning in their lives, such as the youth forum held during a Canadian Council of Refugees conference in Edmonton in May 2007. The forum was hosted by a settlement agency, but the space was provided by a local high school. Thus the refugee students in the school became involved in this event through both the agencies and the school.

The students of other high schools which do not have partnerships with settlement agencies seem to be involved mostly at the academic levels of the schools. Students such as Alfie, Mary, Sam and Larry participate minimally in other school activities, making their experiences less complex or rich. The students such as Brian and Daniel, who attend schools that have partnerships with settlement agencies are involved in a variety of activities around the school making them more confident in their abilities and perhaps giving them a broader outlook to their future. Diana seems to be an exception to this. She is attending a school that has a partnership with a settlement agency yet she does not seem to be involved in extracurricular activities. I think this may have to do with her low level of motivation and friendship difficulties which will be discussed in the next chapter.

While discussing their comfort levels in schools, students brought about their thoughts, likes and dislikes about their schools. Some of the dislikes expressed by the students came in the form of school rules and discipline which is discussed in the section below.

School Rules and Discipline

Schools have established rules of dress and student conduct. Some are appreciated by the students while others are disliked. These were expressed by the students in their interviews.

Students coming from different countries of the world find that Canadian schools and teachers are quite relaxed in their discipline. As such one student, Sam, felt that the respect for teachers is greatly lacking, and students are not interested in listening or respecting their teachers. She has found these student behaviours very offensive and mentioned this same dislike during two different occasions.

> C'est côté du discipline … là bas [en Afrique] tu ne peux pas dire n'importe quoi à un professeur mais ici tu peux dire n'importe quoi et insulter les professeurs mais chez nous là bas tu ne peux pas faire ca, tu doit être vraiment compliment…Mais ce que moi je n'aime pas comme les gents qui bavardent en classe, tu voix, des bavardeurs ou de quoi… ici… tu peux dire à un élève ne fais pas ca, ne dérange pas en classe mais lui il ne peut pas arrêter de parler en classe … we have to respect our teachers and listen to them.
> (Sam; Lines 96 – 111, 346; themes 17, 13; codes 17. 3, 13.2)

Diana finds the dress code that has been imposed by the Catholic School Board to be objectionable. Apparently the students are not allowed to show their shoulders or have them bare. Diana was sent home one day for not covering her shoulders.

yeh, well they sent me home for my shoulders, just shoulders,
yeh, I'd be like, someone can wear anything they want ...
(Diana; Lines 141 – 142; theme 17; code 17.3)

Larry, on the other hand, appreciates the lack of a dress code in his school. One of the things that he enjoys best about his school is the fact that he can wear anything he wants, including hats in the school. He stated that he welcomes this greatly as this was not the case in his previous schools. It is interesting to note that two students attending different schools brought about the topic of student dress code with similar view points that they should be able to wear what ever they want.

Mary had complaints about the mandatory religion classes that all students have to take in Catholic Schools regardless of their own faith. She seems to have bitter memories of her time in Campbell School which she talks about here. One of her many concerns about the school were the mandatory participation in religion classes as a non Catholic student. She did eventually leave Campbell School to attend a public school and thus improved her school experiences.

...but that catholic school, especially I wasn't catholic but for
me ....I didn't like the fact that we had to go to church. There
is a program that we had to go to church ...There is like so many
things that I didn't like that wasn't my religion and they would
force you to do it and I am just like NO [emphasis added in her voice]
and we would have like discussions about it and it was weird,
I didn't like it. (Mary; Lines 105 – 109; themes 17, 13; codes 17.3, 13.2)

As Muslim students, Daniel and Brian complained about the lack of space in their school to offer afternoon prayers. As the school population has a majority of Muslim students, they requested a quiet room for students to offer their prayers. Brian and Daniel were also involved in this request.

...students [praying] in the corner ...people can see us and students
are walking, going to their lockers, getting their books, you know, ...

So its still distraction, yelling and screaming, they don't even care if you are praying or not...and you can't focus on your prayer. (Brian; Lines 807 – 811; theme 17; code 17.3)

Unfortunately, this was denied to them by their principal stating the following reason:

...if I give to you a room, then the Christians will say, give us a room. And the Jews, they say, give us a room... They don't want to give us because that's the reason he made, the principal he say, hey, if I give to you, you guys, a Muslim room, the Christians will [want] a room, and then the Jews ... (Brian; Lines 850 – 851; theme 17; code 17.3)

During their interviews, students expressed their dislikes around school rules such as dress code, mandatory religion classes and the lack of a prayer room. Others found the lack of discipline and the lack of respect for the teachers abhorrent.

In summary, some teachers have been very helpful and accommodating with their time in assisting refugee students and have brought them a level of success in their education. However, these have been isolated incidences where individual teachers have assisted the students out of the goodness of their hearts. Through the consistent student revelations, research literature and the experiences of the settlement agencies, one can see that refugee student support is lacking in schools. The processes and organizational structures of the schools, the low teacher expectations, the failure of the school to acknowledge student needs and the failure of the schools to acknowledge and include racial identities have caused many differentiations in education (Moore, 2004). The schools also need to recognize that the discourses of achieving "excellence" and "students at risk" are a systemic form of racism as these tests are developed with reference to the majority of the students that are of middle class Anglo-Celtic culture. (Dei 2006, Kelly 2006)

The schools continue to regard the students as deficient, blame them for their lack of language or education gaps, and take for granted their own middle class cultural

values. Since similar student accounts come from a variety of schools, one can see that there are no school wide or even school board wide policies of ensuring refugee student success. If there were such policies, we would have seen at least some extra student assistance in classrooms or some extra programs after school. After school programs that operate in some schools are initiated and run by settlement agencies and ethnic communities.

Students dislike of the school rules seem to be minor issues in comparison to the greater challenges of academic achievement and successful completion of grade school. However even minor issues can contribute to a negative or positive climate in the schools. The data analysis so far has been concerned about the internal aspects of the schools, i.e. the organization and processes of the schools, their rules and procedures that categorize, select and order pupils thus affecting refugee students in their goal of a successful completion and graduation from grade school.

Students, though, have their own lived experiences, attitudes, knowledge, support and skills they bring to the school setting. Though these vary individually, they have a tremendous effect on the success or failure of the students in their academic lives. These are discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis II

The Externalist Accounts of Students

Students bring in their own lived experiences, attitudes, knowledge to the school. As they interact with others, they form new realities and interpretations. This chapter looks at students' abilities and capacities to respond to the school environment around them. These abilities and capacities can be grouped together as externalist accounts or how students relate to the school and others around them. Moore (2004) describes these externalist accounts as "... aspects of an individual's 'socially determined capacity to respond to the demands of the particular educational arrangements to which he is exposed' (Floud and Halsey, 1961 as quoted by Moore 2004, p.18). Moore further explains the concept of externalist accounts of students:

> Hence the following kinds of things are identified as causing social differences in education:
>
> - presumed innate differences between groups in terms of IQ or cognitive capacities
> - material deprivation
> - cultural deprivation such as the general lack of literacy in families and of the social and/or linguistic skills and knowledge required to effectively deal with schools
> - social differences in degrees of educational motivation and social aspiration

- differences in 'cultural capital' (Moore 2004, p. 18, 19)

These externalist accounts are discussed below under topics such as students' cultural capital, student attitudes and perseverance, aspirations for the future, support from settlement agencies, social interactions, gender issues, intersections of gender and race and violence in schools.

Students' Cultural Capital

Cultural capital, a sociological term coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1973) has been now commonly understood as the knowledge, experience and connections a person has through the course of his/her life that enables him/her to be more successful than someone with a less experienced background. Wotherspoon (2004) describes cultural capital as " the resources that people possess for economic and social success include not only wealth and economic assets, but also knowledge and understandings about social expectations, dominant values, and other pertinent information that institutions use in their ongoing operations" (p. 51). The cultural capital that the refugee students have acquired over their lives is enabling them to be successful in schools.

Students whose parents spent a great deal of money in their heritage countries, ensuring their children learn English have fared better here in Canada. Alfie, Mary and Daniel's parents or families spent extra money for English medium schools, extra tuition in English or for attending two different schools to give their children the best possible education in their earlier years. This has paid off here in Canada as they are succeeding in schools. The extra steps these families took have given these youth an edge over other refugee students as they already knew the host language. These parents continue their high expectations for their children to succeed academically.

Students whose parents or families have been directly involved in or have taken great interest in their youth's education have also done well in school. There seems to be a push from these parents or a constant reminder that school is a priority and the students

must do well and not disappoint the family. On the other hand, those students who have less parental influences seem to have more difficulties in school.

> They [my parents] come every semester [for parent teacher interviews], they ask what I can do, what I can do to improve my English. They're really really concerned about my school, what I should do...(Mary; Lines 329 – 330; theme 15; code 15.1)

> She [my mother] is a, she is just keeping telling me to try harder in my school myself in order to get, like, a degree or to be big, big bright future, have a bright future... My brother is more involved in my education, more than anybody in my house ... because my brother went all through all those high school courses, so he know what should I do, what shouldn't I do. He, whenever he sees my report card, he tells me what to take. He's choosing my courses. He chose all my three year courses, what to take, what not to take. He helped me a lot in it, and then since he's ahead of me, one year or two year in education, so he's keeping telling me what is best for me, what should I do. (Alfie; Lines 666 – 683; theme 15; code 15.2)

> They [my parents] encourage me to do my homework. They tell me to do my homework. They tell me to go there, ... but they cannot help me with the homework, or the things I need help with, so everything I have to do for my own...
> (Daniel; Lines 1092 -1094; theme 15, code 15.1)

There are also those students whose parents may not have spent a great deal of money on the children's early years of education, however still support them in their education with high expectations and assistance in school work.

> Every homework club, ESL club, all that thing they [parents] used to help me, they used to take me, drove me there,

you know, they used to take me a lot, right now I think I'm good.
Right now English is better than them, and I'm good...
(Brian; Lines 1059 – 1061; theme 15; code 15.1)

...son opinion est pour que je deviens, un jour, quelqu'un comme,
je ne sais pas comment dire ca, quelqu'un de spéciale un jour,
il veut me voir un jour que je suis quelqu'un qui peut me déplier,
aider des autres, savoir comment je dois faire dans la vie.
(Sam; Lines 175 – 177; theme 15; 15.1)

Unfortunately, there are other students who have less support from their parents. They continue their studies in school, but the lack of support and mentorship from the parents do seem to affect them. They appear to struggle with their lives, either financially or academically. Specifically two students come to mind, Diana and Larry.

Diana had a fall out with her father and is not living at home any more. Even though she receives student finances, she still has to work. She lives with her sister who is a youth herself, but does not have the support of a parent to guide her through her difficult times. She is also struggling to complete her high school studies. The extra mental and emotional support of a parent does make a difference in the success of a youth.

Larry lives with his uncle, however does not have the same relationship as that of father and son. Larry's father passed away when he was still an infant. He feels he is not able to relate as well with his family members, and speak openly about certain issues. He claims that the African culture has put many limits in the communication between parents and children, not allowing families to have open communication that is greatly needed to ensure that the younger generation remain focused in their studies and out of trouble. He finds that parents ask their children whether homework has been completed, or whether they went to school, etc., but their children are not able to discuss other matters with their parents.

> Même moi maintenant,... il y des choses que j'aime le dire mais je ne peut pas parce que j'ai pas était ... comme ca, il n'a pas ouvert son cœur pour que je puisse le dire tout... parce que je n'ai pas cette liberté de dire toute que je veux, puis maintenant c'est trop tard, j'ai honte tu voix j'ai honte je ne pas le dire moi... (Larry; Lines 888 – 896; theme 15; code 15.3)

Parents are concerned about the education of their children and some of these families have been in contact with their schools to ensure their children's success. The research literature shows that parents of refugee youth are not as involved in the school as other middle class non-immigrant parents for a variety of reasons already discussed in Chapter One. In spite of these barriers, parents are giving their youth the message that education is the most important task they have at hand. Thus some students have shown a strong sense of perseverance and motivation to achieve scholastic success. This is discussed in detail in the next section.

Student Perseverance and Motivation

The one common thread amongst all the students has been their perseverance and attitude towards learning. All of the students interviewed were determined to complete their high school and do well in school. The students spent most of their time at home or in the library after school hours to study. Only Alfie and Diana held part time jobs during school terms. All the others maximized their time outside of school on learning and improving their marks. Very little time was spent on non scholastic activities in the school or community as all their time was devoted to scholastic achievement. Some attended homework clubs run by their own ethnic communities or by settlement agencies to ensure they received the help they needed, or gave assistance to others in their school work. Others worked late into the nights studying, doing homework, when many of their peers were out on leisure activities. When they were asked if they thought of dropping out of school, all of their responses were that you cannot have a future in Canada without education. They all wanted to be somebody, they all wanted to be successful.

No, never because I know how hard it is in Canada to live without education, and so, no, never.
(Alfie; Lines 819 – 820; theme 18; code 18.2)

...' cause I'm going to be, nothing, no, no, no... it's not an option, I have never thought of it ... 'cause I want to go to university and be somebody... He [my dad] just wants me to study and stuff, so it's very, its very, study, study, study, study... (Mary; Lines 441 – 457; theme 18; code 18.2)

…je n'ai pas le temps assez de travailler parce qu'il faut que je fasse d'abord mes études…
(Sam; Lines 215- 216; theme 18, 7; code 18.2, 7.4)

No, I don't. I don't work right now. Yeah. I think its going to affect my grades ... (Daniel; Lines 1667 – 1672; theme 7; code 7.4)

…. sans l'éducation, je serai rien, je ne serais rien, je ne veux pas travailler comme les gents que je vois … ils travaillent comme à McDonalds … mais je rêve comme avoir d'éducation…
(Larry; Lines 726 – 736; theme 18; code 18.2)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Diana has had personal problems in her life. She has no parental support as she was kicked out by her father and now lives with her older sister. This has affected her motivation in completing her courses in a timely fashion. She is still determined to complete her high school and she realizes she will need to do so through a local college as she will not be able to complete it by age twenty as required by Alberta Education.

According to Derwing et al. (1999), successful students were those that took initiative in asking for assistance, showed determination and perseverance in achieving their goal, however those who did not complete school tended to be more passive and not take initiative in seeking assistance.

Doing well in school is an important aspect of the students' lives. The success of the students interviewed can be seen in their perseverance and involvement in scholastic activities. It can also be seen by their future aspirations which are discussed below.

Aspirations for the Future

All students interviewed, with the exception of Diana, planned to attend a post secondary institution. Alfie, Mary and Daniel are all on track with their coursework including English to attend university toward which they have shown a desire. All of these three want to specialize in the fields of Science, specifically wanting to become doctors. Mary, especially, wants to stay away from the Arts as it requires writing many papers. She wants to be done with 'English' as a subject as soon as she leaves high school!! Brian and Sam have shown interest in becoming nurses, completing their studies through a local college. Sam also desires to go into the hospitality business. Larry is planning to attend a technical school and become a mechanic. His actual dream is to become a pilot which is a very expensive career choice, thus he has settled for something less expensive. Sam and Larry will have to switch from a French medium high school to an English medium college for their post secondary courses. Larry has completed English 30-2 and Sam will be doing so in the near future. I wonder if that course is enough for them to do well in college or technical schools, or will it affect their learning. They may have to further upgrade their English skills to be successful at an English medium post secondary course. As for Brian, as long as he completes English 30-2 and his other prerequisites before the age of twenty, he will be able to graduate from high school and pursue his career at a local college. If he is unable to do so, then he will need to upgrade further and complete his high school at a local college before applying for a post secondary course.

Diana, unfortunately, seems to be running out of time. She does realize that she will need to upgrade at a later time as she will most likely not graduate by age twenty. She is now concentrating on working, saving money and opening up a business in the future. She is also continuing with dancing, her favourite hobby.

The externalist aspects that this chapter has discussed so far have been the students' parental support, their motivation and perseverance as well as their future aspirations. Settlement agencies, however, also provide a means of support to the students. Theses agencies are often a bridge between the school and the students. Below are students' thoughts on the agencies as well their involvement with agencies' activities.

Support From Settlement Agencies

Apart from schools and parents, refugee students also receive support from settlement agencies. This support comes in the form of homework clubs, cultural clubs, social support through various activities as well as walking students through the required paper work to apply for other types of assistance.

In my own research of settlement agencies, I found them to be very valuable in assisting students and parents in understanding and becoming familiar with the education systems of Alberta. Agencies were involved in supporting some schools and their refugee students by carrying out culture and homework clubs after school and on weekends. One agency also assisted in the implementation of a high school credit course of CALM for students who were at high risk of dropping out or being pushed out, students who were over eighteen but still in ELL classes. They have also been instrumental in providing assistance to schools in understanding the situation of refugee students and providing them with guidance in implementing student programming. Settlement agencies also provide support to refugee students in a variety of other areas, including career investigation, goal setting, and employment. The workers do not regard this as a job, but a commitment to help the refugee people. They are constantly advocating on their behalf at many different governmental levels.

When the students were asked about settlement agencies, the answers were quite varied. Some students benefitted tremendously from their services, others did not use them at all, and most were in between this continuum.

Mary felt that the settlement agencies were somewhat useful, she went to their homework clubs some Saturdays. She stated that she would rather come to the homework club than waste her time sitting at home watching television.

> ...Most of the time I study at home. [At the] Relocation Center sometimes I help, sometimes I get help so that's about it. If I have a math question, or a science question they help me out, that's about it.(Mary; Lines 415 – 418; theme 14; code 14.1)

Alfie does not use these agencies at all. On their first week to Canada, someone from a settlement agency came to show them around, assisted them in filling out all necessary legal documents, showed them important government buildings, took him to school, but then after that, the family fended for itself. They did not receive any help nor did they feel that they needed such help. The family was quite self sufficient and independent. Alfie also has not attended any homework clubs or received academic assistance from any organization other than the school and his family.

Diana found them very helpful, especially during her ordeal with her father. She needed a place to stay, money to live on and this settlement agency with its youth worker were extremely helpful and supportive.

> ...cause like me especially also they helped me, you know, to find a place, they almost get for me to get a student loan, settled, go to school, go to work, when my dad kicked me out. Yah, it has been really useful to me 'cause first of all I needed a place to stay, second I need money for school, education 'cause I need to finish my education. I achieve my goals 'cause that's my dream, I don't want to, you know, just drop out... (Diana; Lines 385 -398; theme 14; code 14.4)

Brian and Daniel have found both the settlement agency and their own ethnic Somali community very useful.

...We have actually a group, a Somali community in [the city] which every person who need help, they're going to help you, so you go there, and its up to you if you need to go help, so I go there... I need to learn a nurse, and that's my real goal that I want to do it, and they always help ...
(Brian; Lines 1015 – 1018; theme 14; code 14.1)

I go to the Somali community centre where I mostly volunteer there, so the kids come there, like junior high and high, and elementary, so I help them with their homework. And some, some other volunteers come, too, that I can ask them, like to help me ..... like, they finish at university, so. I go there and get help.
(Daniel; Lines 1100 – 1103; theme 14; code 14.1)

They also found a settlement agency, Services for Refugees Center (SRC) to be very useful, especially the services they provide to refugee students through cultural clubs after school.

That SRC center is the only, one thing that helped me for real, for me is the day I came, SRC center is where we go...when I came to [the city], I get help from them, I get summer school from there English ... my English was so weak. So, Miss Nancy helped me a lot too, like Culture Canada club that we learn a lot right now in, in High Meadow High School, she helped us by how to get your citizenship, 'cause we are still, we're not citizens, we're still immigrant...How to get jobs, yeah, and all that kind of stuff...money, like they teach you the culture of this country. They teach you how to like how to go, where to go, and some of the government policies, all the rules...It's a lot of fun. You know, like they teach you a lot to things that you really need in the basic ..... how can you live in Canada, how to adapt to this environment 'cause we are two culture right now, our own culture

> in Somali, and this new culture. Its actually not culture, but it's a mosaic culture so a new culture for you to adapt so they teach you all these things, and the eating of the food, how to choose good food, you know, all kind of stuff, and they teach us (Brian; Lines 1823 – 1847; themes 14; codes 14.1, 14.4)

When Brian and Daniel were asked if what they learned at school was enough to help them settle into their host country, they felt very strongly that it was not enough. The boys feel that refugees need individuals who have lived through similar experiences to assist them in ways they don't even know that they need. They need someone who can understand their experiences, who understands their culture and who has had comparable experiences. The schools, unfortunately, are not able to provide such assistance.

> ...Somebody who's understanding what you need, somebody who passed the way you are right now, somebody who knows, and used to be the same as you ... People like you can relate to, and, and have gone the same experience. Maybe you [have the] same background, speaking language... (Brian; Lines 1913 – 1923; theme 14; codes 14.4)

> They [school personnel] just assume that you don't have all these problems, …they treat you same as they treat the people who are born here. (Daniel; Lines 1910 – 1911; theme 13; code 13.2)

Larry does not have a place to go for extra assistance with his school work other than his teachers or friends. The Association for Families (AFF) has discussed establishing a homework club, or assisting the community in promoting a soccer team for the African youth but neither have materialized as yet.

The sociological literature confirms the above findings. For refugee students to be successful, some of the factors that they must have are a strong social support network, family stability and community services available to them (Cole, 1998). She also states that schools need a multidisciplinary approach with other agencies to provide counselling

and consultation, be more culturally sensitive and train staff in recognizing cultural nuances. Social networks are also developed through the sharing between culturally similar families who can assist in providing services, as well as supporting them to connect with the majority culture (Chung et al., 2000, Morland, 2005). Newcomers find it difficult to access the services provided by the host country due to their lack of familiarity of language, systems and services, as well as the lack of understanding of refugee cultures by the service providers, therefore same culture families became critical in bridging the gap between the two, acting as a mediator for both parties (Morland, 2005). These findings in the literature clearly show that successfully engaged students are those who have used these social support services. Those who are less engaged with their schools or are struggling may not have benefitted from these extra services.

Settlement agencies also concur with these findings. They argue that students need holistic support to be successful in schools, not just learning academics. Many other issues are at play from mental health, finances, family issues that can deter from a child's success in school. If these issues are addressed either by the school, family or social workers, the child will experience success in school. On the other hand, if these barriers are not addressed adequately, then the child will be at risk for school failure.

In summary, settlement agencies and some ethnic communities provide assistance to refugee students with their education, as well as their financial, housing and social needs in the host country. The agencies seem to be an integral part of many of students' lives, especially for those that have less family support.

Another major support for these youths has been their friends. Their friendship groups consist mostly of individuals of their own ethnicity with a few people from other cultures. They support one another through difficult times or just come together as friends. This is discussed in more details in the section below.

Friendships

A great part of the support system of the refugee students are their friends. They spend many hours together in school, outside of school, help each other with school work or with other problems or issues, or just have fun and keep each other company. The friendship groups are mostly made up of individuals of the same ethnicities with a few friends from different cultures, except Mary.

Mary has a group of friends that is a good mix of different cultures. Mary finds support from these school friends as they have fun together, assist each other in school work, and just provide a listening ear.

> ....There was this time that I did really bad in Math. I was so mad, because my parents were so pissed off, I was like I want to kill myself, right? I was at home them ... I told her [my friend] about my parents, I told her about everything single thing 'cause I was just so mad. She told me more about her family that would make me go cry, In the end I realized who am I to complain, you know. Who am I to say this and that when people are dying. She made me realize so many things... I help them in Math, and I help them in school and education. I help them ...but usually they help me. Some of the friends that I have are pretty much very smart, but they help me. I mean they would buy food and make sure they're the kind of friends to help me with the phone when I need help with math and science. They would tell me questions, they're good people. (Mary; Lines 662 – 673; theme 9; code 9.1)

Diana also has one best friend whom she describes as:

> ...we have been together for, well we met at my work place, ... then we started talking and we have been friends, good friends. (Diana; Lines 197 – 198; theme 9; code 9.2)

She does not seem to have many friends from school. She speaks about getting along with them sometimes, and staying calm when there are problems.

> I'm usually just like, yeh we talk and ... we have drama, ... but we do get along sometimes ... like girls who don't like swimming ..., something wrong ... don't feel comfortable, ... the only thing you can do is stay calm and don't yell...
> (Diana; Lines 204 – 210; theme 9; code 9.3)

Alfie also has a set of friends with whom he enjoys movies, soccer, golf and camping. They hang around together, not so much to help each other in school work but for companionship. They share good times and support one another. His friends are mostly Afghani, with one Euro-Canadian youth.

Larry, Sam, Daniel, Brian and Alfie all have a set of friends to hang out with, to do leisure activities with, or to assist in school work if needed. It is interesting to note that all these student refugees have friends from their country of origin, along with friends of other ethnic backgrounds. They have not limited themselves to only people from their own country, but the majority are of the same ethnic background. This probably makes them feel more comfortable as they have more in common with each other. The girls have other issues with friends that are categorized below under gender as they pertain to restrictions imposed upon them by their parents.

Gender Issues

One of the girls interviewed has issues with friends that are specific to being female. Mary has a set of friends that is racially mixed as she finds there is no one in the school from her ethnic background. Diana seems to have one best friend only, she has not found others that she can relate to or feel comfortable with. Sam has school friends who are mostly from her country.

The boys meet up after school and do a number of things, as stated earlier. The girls' friendships and activities, however are restricted to school time only, they do not

carry over on the weekends or after school. Mary says that she is not allowed to go out to malls, movies, etc. with her friends. This has caused many arguments and fall outs with her friends. As she explains,

> I don't do much outside ... I'm not allowed to, so I don't know, my dad really didn't give a me reason, he just wants me to study and stuff, so I'm not allowed to go to the mall and the only place you can go with your friends is the mall, right? So we don't go to the mall so then, but usually, they [friends] ask me ... if I can please go, but I just can't. But they always ask me if I could go. And they get mad sometimes if I say no. I tell them that I have to do homework, or I tell them I have to do this. I make up some stuff, I don't want to say 'Oh my parents don't want me to come with you guys', that would be bad. ...well, we just had an argument, they're like' why can't you just come with us? Or why do you not want to be friends and stuff?' That got really bad. It's not that, I try to make them understand, but they still don't, and I don't think they understand me but I can't change my Dad. (Mary; Lines 253 – 275; themes 15, 9; codes 15.4, 9.3)

Sam says that her friends are busy working so they do not have time on the weekends and she also has homework to do. She does not say that her parents don't allow it, however when her friends have time they come to see her. So it is possible that there are restrictions from home.

> on ne se rencontre jamais dans le weekend parce que la plupart d'eux travaille mais je reste ici, quand je retourne à la maison, si la le temps … chez moi me voir, … on écoute de la musique, des devoirs à faire, j'ai des devoirs…
> (Sam; Lines 209 – 211; theme 9; code 9.1)

Diana seems to have her own timings as she resides on her own. She did not speak about any restrictions imposed on her by her older sister, or previously with her father

Mary and Diana talk about fall outs with friends, arguing over different issues. They both then make up with their respective friends and life continues. Mary's arguments with friends are often based on her inability to go out on weekends and after school with her friends. Her friends try to understand her dilemma, but not always successfully. They make up for a while and then the same issues come back. Mary is choosing to uphold her family values over the wishes of her friends. She is struggling between the acculturation processes of Integration and Separation (Berry, 2001). Integration allows her to retain her cultural values and add on new host society's values of going out with friends after school, but her family wants her to retain only her cultural values of staying home after school. This struggle is causing conflicts with her friends. Even though she does not mention any conflicts at home, these may be present. Such conflicts between youth and parents are very common as the younger generation begins to adapt to the new society (Pine B. & Drachman D., 2005; Morland et al., 2005; Chung et al., 2000).

Diana did not talk about her arguments with her friend, just that they get mad at each other, and then make up. She did have a fall out with her father which she did not want to discuss in the interview.

Friendships are an integral part of human social life. These refugee youth value their time with their friends and this social support is vital in their adjustment to the new host country and generally for a positive outlook to life. Even though, disagreements occur in their lives, they continue their bonds of friendship as the support of other youth is critical to their adjustment to the host country and for companionship. Anderson (2004) affirms that supportive social environments, including friends, assist in the adjustment to the host country. The most successful acculturation strategy has been found to be integration (Berry, 2001). This is achieved when a person is able to retain his cherished values with a slow incorporation of new values of the host society. This strategy of integration can be seen in the youth choosing friends of their cultures first and then adding few individuals from different cultures as they become more comfortable living in a multicultural society.

Choosing friends amongst your own may be a strategy used by the newcomers for successful integration into the host society. This, however, makes other students uncomfortable as they do not see their school as one student body but a collection of many cultural cliques. This is discussed in further details in the following section.

Social Interactions - Cultural Cliques

Students interviewed were asked about what they disliked in their school and changes they would like to see. While initially all students indicated that they loved their school and generally were very happy with it, after a while they came up with incidences that occurred in the school that they were unhappy with.

It is interesting to note that two students (Mary and Larry) attending different schools came up with the same negative response to cultural cliques. The cultural cliques that occur in high schools are very evident. Students belonging to the same race or faith groups culminate together in the hallways of the school. It is not very often that one sees different races or cultures come together as one student body. The mixing of people does occur inside the classrooms as students are grouped together for projects or team work, but during leisure activities it seems that students prefer to be within their own cultural groups.

> There is actually a little bit of racism going on... Like people in the school, in one hallway there is a Chinese locker and the other way, there is some people who are Muslim, and right here, they're black. So it's not mixed. They're not judgemental and stuff but it's not mixed... it's not multicultural like.
> (Mary; Lines 192 – 204; themes 17, 5; codes 17.1, 5.2)

> comme j'aimais que, comme à l école il y a des groupes,
> je ne sais pas, ce n'est pas de racisme mais tu vas à l école,
> c'est rare que tu vois un groupe des noirs avec des blancs ca.
> La seule fois on est ensemble si on joue au basket, quand on

joue à soccer, c est quand on joue …, mais en recréation, comme les noirs sont en groupe puis les blancs sont allés en groupe. Moi j'aimais qu'on, que ca soit un milieu entre nous, comme commune, comme à l'aise, comme une classe. Je suis parlé avec quelqu'un bien en classe, vous parlez mais en cas de la récréation c'est des groupes. Moi j'aimais qu'on soit ensemble. (Larry; Lines 126 – 132; themes 17, 4; codes 17.1, 4.2)

During class and formal sports activities, students of all cultures work and play together. They communicate with one another, however when it comes to personal time, the students would rather spend the time with people of their own race, ethnicity, and cultures. The mixing of people does not occur even if they know each other from class or sports activities. There are still a few culturally mixed groups of students who spend time together, however it seems that for the most part it is segregated in the hallways. Mary and Larry feel that there is more to gain from mixing the cultures, such as knowing one another, understanding one another, yet there seems to be comfort in being with people you have more in common with. These groupings are most evident with students from South East Asia and Japan, it seems, as many of them come here as International students and they group themselves in greater numbers probably for companionship (Alberta Education, 2008).

I would like people from different backgrounds to come, you know, and mix with people that are for their country, people should be. They're worried that there is another culture, you know that you have to get to know people more, and what they like, rather than being in one group, ... you learn something, you respect, you have respect for them.
(Mary; Lines 298 – 302; theme 4; code 4.2)

pour qu'on puisse comme progresser parce que le fait que tu côtois toujours les même personnes tu n'apprends pas beaucoup de chose, mais quand tu côtois d'autres cultures, tu apprends

> d'autre choses par apport ce quoi être noir comme chaque jour tu es sait, c'est m'apprends les cultures noires, les choses africaines. Quand je côtois encore un blanc là je lui apprends quelque chose de lui et là que moi j'ai pas puis lui aussi comme il va aussi apprendre quelque chose que moi j'ai que lui n'a pas.
> (Larry; Lines 148 – 152; theme 4; code 4.2)

Diana who seems to only have one best friend does mention that people make friendships with their own kind, leaving others out.

> ...probably sometimes you know 'cause usually most people come from countries get a, just get a friend from this country
> (Diana; Lines 339 – 340; theme 5; code 5.2)

On the other hand though, when asked if such cultural groups or cliques occur in Gregory Dean School, Alfie did not look at it as cultural cliques, but as groups of friends spending time together.

> Its all mixed, yeah, whoever is somebody's friends...nobody cares ... everybody's there.
> (Alfie Lines 1052 – 1057; themes 4, 9; codes 4.3, 9.1)

This segregation of people is not due to language skills, as both Mary and Larry have a good command of either English or French respectively. And if students are able to build relationships in the classroom, why do these not transfer to leisure times? The majority of the students do not gather in ethnically mixed groups, even if they can communicate well in English. It is a phenomenon that occurs both with newcomers and those who can speak the language well. These cultural cliques seem to make the students' experiences in school somewhat unpleasant as they do not see their school communities coming together as one community, they only see it in classrooms and formal school sponsored activities. Mary also feels that multicultural days celebrated in many high schools are not enough to build bridges between the different cultures in the school.

As mentioned earlier, the students interviewed have made friends mostly within their ethnic group though they are not exclusive. Youth from other cultures have also joined them. They are a great support to each other in school or outside of the school. Some students feel that the cliques are more about friendships, people that are friends have lockers close to one another. Others think that it is a type of a racist activity, the fact that people are not mingling on their own free time.

Students spoke candidly about racial issues occurring within the student body, most of it being very subtle. Even though students prefer to be in mixed groups, often this is difficult due to people's behaviours and attitudes. This is discussed in greater details in the following section.

Issues of Racialization Among Students

Students who were interviewed spoke about the discrimination or subtle racism that occurs among the youth. Even though they would prefer to be in mixed groups of friends but it is often difficult to do so due to peoples' attitudes towards certain racial groups.

For example, in Capelli School, the White and the Black students hardly spend time together during their free time. They will interact with one another in class, in sports activities but in their own free time, they stay in their own racialized groups. This may be due to that fact they do not have too many experiences or sentiments in common. Moreover Larry, who attends Capelli School, said that it was easier for him to make friends with White boys in New Brunswick than here in Alberta. According to him, it may be because there are fewer black people in Moncton than here in [the city], thus one is obliged to make friends and integrate into the larger community. This is not the case in [the city], where there is a very large Black population, especially within the Francophone district. Thus it is very easy to make a friend in the Black community.

> Je me suis en moins intégré facilement [a Moncton], j'ai
> comme plein des amis, je me suis porter tout, mais quand j'ai

> arrivé ici, puis c'est une grande ville, comme il y a plusieurs de races, en plein de noirs, c'est facile de trouver un ami noir c'est plus facile de trouver un ami noir par rapport un ami blanc… (Larry; Lines 316 – 319; theme 9; code 9.4)

> C'est rare que tu vois un garçon blanc [dans les fêtes des noirs]. Puis si tu vas un garçon blanc dans une fête de noirs, c'est comme un gangster (Larry; Lines 127, 395 – 396; theme 9; code 9.4)

Racism and discrimination among students seems to be ongoing in a subtle manner. People of different races are calling each other different names, sometimes in a joking manner or sometimes in a serious manner. Racism is practiced by all racial or cultural groups. As Brian and Daniel explain:

> for me the racism is a lot whether its blacks or whites ... See, I saw some white guys that say, you're ...., some black guys saying, oh, you're white. They're making fun of the whites. Or some whites are making fun of the blacks. Or some Arabs are making fun with Palestinians ... its all, you know, racism... (Daniel; Lines 1519 – 1522; theme 5; code 5.2)

When they were asked as to how they deal with it, they often just ignore it because it is subtle. Even though it hurts, they let it go and not complain.

> Me, I don't, like it didn't happen to me, lots in life really bad happen to me about racism, some of it is just minor things, just ... I don't feel good about it, it hurts when people do that. (Brian; Lines 1584 – 1586; theme 5; code 5.2)

However, Brian feels strongly towards his religion. Someone made a derogatory comment about his religion, he complained to the Principal and the offending student was suspended.

> He was trying, kind of making fun of my religion, and right away I didn't tell him anything, I go to the principal and say this guy's making fun of my religion there's a reason to, and he got suspended for five days, and he didn't even mention that again, but he is still my friend, but I won't let him to make fun of my religion (Brian; Lines 1555 – 1559; theme 5; code 5.3)

The majority of student friendships are made with youth who share the same language, culture and/or religion, with some mixture of other students. They all find that racism, no matter how subtle, is present. Students of different backgrounds continue to discriminate against one another. One such example is that of interracial dating which is discussed in the following section.

Intersections of Race and Gender

The set of questions used for the interviews did not include any questions on an important aspect of a youth's life, dating. The students also did not speak about this topic on their own accord except Larry. The other students also did not mention the inclusion of the other gender in their group of friends. Larry, on the other hand, spoke candidly about the issue of interracial dating and friendships. It seems to be the cause of much animosity between students, specifically in one school.

According to Larry, White and Black boys interact in classrooms and sports, but are not necessarily friends or spend free time together. The White girls are an exception, they are very willing to befriend Black boys and also go out with them on dates. In fact some Black boys are invited to White boys' parties, however one will rarely see a White boy attend a Black party, with the exception of White girls who attend both.

> La plupart des garçons noirs sont aves des filles blanches dans l'école et même ailleurs… comme la plupart des garçons noirs sont aves des filles blanches puis quand il y a un parti, c'est les seules jeunes qui sont blancs c'est les filles… (Larry; Lines 155 – 156, 394 – 395; theme 5; code 5.4)

I asked why this is the case, why do the Black boys go out with White girls, and not as much with Black girls. He said that there are less restrictions and more freedom on dates with White girls than Black girls. Even though the African continent is vast with diverse cultures, Larry mentions that African parents are stricter with time and curfew. This is not the case with White girls, moreover one can be freer with White girls. The African boys have become more accustomed to this freedom and thus enjoy going out with White girls. African girls rarely go out with White boys as they do not feel comfortable doing so.

> Cela comme elles [the Black girls] n'ont pas comme ca de liberté de faire ce qu'elles veulent par apport des filles blanches. Tu ne peux pas aller embrasser une fille noire, par exemple, devant ses parents. C'est notre culture, c'est du respect, puis c'est plus contrôler …elle ne peut pas aller dehors puis de retourner chez eux comment onze heures du soir ou a minuit. Or les blancs ils ont la liberté, elles parlent à maman, « je sorte et rentrer lendemain »…. Puis nous aussi les garçons, si dès qu'on ait arrivés ici on a complètement changé comme nous, les garçons noirs, on aime la liberté, on aime aller dehors s'amuser, plus les seules filles qui peuvent faire cette tâche ca sont des blancs que … Pour aller au soir avec une fille noire, il y a beaucoup des règles, comme vous allez au cinéma, il est dix heures, … il faut que la fille rentre chez eux, … comme peut être la punit et tout ca.(Larry; Lines 164 – 173; theme 15; code 15.4)

I also asked if there was any animosity among Black and White boys about dating White girls. Larry feels that there are some hidden animosities but the White boys do not speak about this issue openly, but rather seem to joke about it.

> Yes, sometimes, they [the White boys] ask why comme vous avez quelque chose spéciale tout ca comme ils jokent mais c'est qu'ils voient loin tu comprends qu'ils veulent dire … ils n'est pas content que ca arrive. Oui il y ca, you know. Mais moi je réponds que look … pourquoi ma choisit, je ne pas répondre à sa place. Il

> y a, ca arrive, ca arrive, les gent disent ca comme tu vois mais pas ca directement lui comme une blague. You black guys … comme vous possédez tout, comme si aller te donner compliment mais on fonce c'est parce qu'ils feel sorry.
> (Larry; Lines 618 – 624; theme 5, code 5.4)

According to Larry, the White and Black boys do not have physical fights over the issue of interracial dating even though the White boys are not happy with the situation. The White and Black girls, however, are not on good terms with one another. They seem to be having many conflicts and in fact they do not speak with one another. Larry does not give the reasons for such struggles, but it can be inferred from his interview that they seem to stem from interracial dating. On the other hand, Sam does not mention any such clashes in school, she says she gets along well with everyone. But Larry states,

> …surtout les filles noires et les filles blanches. Elles sont pires que nous, les filles blanches et les filles noires, c'est rare qu'elles se parlent aussi… (Larry; Lines 641 – 642; theme 5; codes 5.5, 5.6)

When I asked Larry if White and Black boys fought over girls, he said:

> non, j'ai jamais comme vu un fight comme blancs et noirs, à part des filles. J'ai jamais vu ca. Mais au contraire, les filles noires et les filles blanches, combien des beef, il y a comme des fight …
> (Larry; Lines 626 – 627; themes 5, 8; codes 5.4, 5.5, 8.1)

Larry has alluded to the interracial dating to be a possible cause for these fights. At the time of the interview, he was going out with a White girl and he told her that he does not want other students from school to know that they are going out.

> …quand je sortais avec la fille [blanche], écoute on sont ensemble mais je ne veux pas à l'école que tu montres comme ensemble, mais je ne sais pas comment tout le monde la 'see' ca …(Larry; Lines 636 – 637; themes 5, 9; codes 5.5, 9.4)

Sociological research argues that Black women have held a vast amount of bitterness toward White women for having 'stolen' their black men in intimate relationships (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). Historically, there have been relationship difficulties between Black men and women that many Black men choose to cohabit or marry White women, leaving the Black women feeling rejected by their own kind. Thus this rancour is exhibited against White women, while they seem oblivious to this enmity felt by their Black sisters. Is this the case in Capelli School? It may be a possibility.

Violence does occur in schools between different races, often motivated by other matters. This can be seen by the above example of issues of race and gender intersecting causing many conflicts. More details on the topic of violence are discussed in the following section.

Violence in Schools

All the students interviewed mentioned that they had seen fights occurring in their schools. None of them knew the exact reasons behind such fights, but could speculate. In seems that some of this violence stems from issues not related to race, yet on the other hand, they seem to be between racialized groups. They seem, then, to be still racially motivated.

The fight that Mary mentioned was between a Black student and a Chinese student, apparently the Black student was called a 'nigger'.

> there was a big , big, big fight. I think it was like 3 months between this black kid, I don't know where he's from, but I know this kid is black, him and this Chinese guy. The 2 gangsters, known gangsters had a fight about it...You know like in a school that's academic, there's certain people that are bad, right ... they had a very big fight there, so actually the Chinese guy called him nigger that was like a big shock... (Mary; Lines 514 – 525; theme 8; code 8.2)

Alfie spoke about two to three fights in the last year or so, however he had never seen them. He had heard of what happened, people hitting each other, cars being wrecked, the school constable becoming involved etc. Alfie did not know the reasons for these fights,

but he was quite sure that it was not racially motivated. He said that often the people involved were of the same race.

> No, that's same race, same, because I never heard a fight happen with two races...No, no, not, because they just, something mostly about girls, or something like that...Probably sometime the same race, sometimes a different race, but not because of the race, just because of something else. (Alfie; Lines 1086 – 1093; theme 8; code 8.3)

Daniel and Brian speak about quite a few fights occurring in the school between students of different cultures, between Arabs and Somalis, between Arabs and Whites. They do not seem to know the initial reason for the fights but they find that other students of the same cultural background are recruited to assist with the initial fights. These two boys have been asked to assist fellow Somalis in these quarrels but they stayed away saying that it was not their problem. They personally have not been involved in these clashes. They feel that the presence of a school constable helps in keeping these brawls to a minimum.

> ...one whole week, there was fight between Somalis and Arabs, so there's always fight, and... it was a couple of weeks ago again it was the Arabs and the Whites fighting all, ...'cause the most of the majority in our school is Arab, so I don't know if its racism or not, but still, you know, there's fight between them you know. One colour, one background, fights with the other background... (Daniel; Lines 1603 -1608; theme 8; code 8.2)

> The reason is just only one guy is trying to fight with the other guy, and then when he tried to fight with other guy, if he got beat up, I mean, the others are helping. The others, are helping, you know, this is a coming together and the wars are starting. (Brian; Lines 1616 – 1618; theme 8; code 8.2)

Many fights occur in schools, some are between racial groups, however the reasons are often unknown to the students interviewed. Students of the same cultural backgrounds are recruited to assist their fellow students, often I think with the real reasons being forgotten. If Brian and Daniel were being recruited, then it can be assumed that they would know the reasons behind these fights. If such reason is unknown, then perhaps the initial causes of the fight may become secondary and the primary cause then becomes more 'racial or cultural'. It is possible that the initial cause may be related to other issues, but when people get angry, they may utter racial comments, then the focus of the struggle becomes racially motivated.

Violence in schools is occurring though it may not be prevalent. Students of different backgrounds fight one another, but the reasons are not fully known to the interviewees. These conflicts may be caused by non racial issues but when individuals become enraged, they may utter some racial comments. Often these racial comments stem from stereotypes that people hold against other racial groups. Thereafter, the conflict is no longer about the initial cause, but becomes more racially orientated. Other students of the same race/culture are then recruited to fight, becoming an issue of 'us' and 'them'. This issue of stereotypes come out strongly in the interviews, especially from two African students, and is discussed in the section below.

Stereotypes

Two of the students interviewed spoke about the stereotypes that Black students face in schools. They find them offensive. Stereotypes, of Black boys being regarded as gangsters and Black students excelling only in Music and Sports but not academically, are often displayed and experienced.

One of the stereotypes that Larry addresses is that all Black youths are considered gangsters. People approach them for drugs, or speak with them in a gangster style dialect. Even within their style of dressing and choice of colours, people look for indications of gang membership. Larry has personally experienced these situations.

…les blancs garçons ils croient que tout les noirs sont des gangsters, mais la plupart des gents qui s'approchent de nous la façon donc il y comme des façons dont on parle, la façon comme on se salut comme vous … je ne vous pas dit « yo what up », ca c'est, comme je ne connais pas le kid, je peux dire « how are you, how are you doing », mais eux ils viennent … « eh Larry how are you doing man, so what's popping », ils faut comme des choses dans l'anglais des gangsters, des violats là. Parfois il me dit « yo,you got herbs », herbs ca veut dire le marijuana et tout, tu vois. Ca c'est la façon qu'ils croient comme on peut l'accueillir, you know, … mais c'est pas tout le monde, c'est pas tous le noirs qui fument ca, c'est pas tous les noirs qui sont des gangsters. Comme pour le moment, la plupart des blancs qui je parle qui viennent me parler, moi parfois je m'habille en rouge, en bleu, je ne sais si vous savez … des groupes ici, des blacks, des crippers vous savez ca ce sont des groupes, des gangs comme les black s'habillent en rouge, puis les crippes s'habillent en bleu parfois, mais moi je suis à aucun gang, moi je m habille parce que je peux m'habiller. Puis j'habille en rouge et puis un blanc m'a dit « what up man, you' re black » puis je dis je ne suis pas black, j'ai dans un aucun groupe, je suis Larry comme tu vois. Puis il me dit « moi je suis black », you know, il veut que je suis soit attention, il veut que je lui respect « ah tu es black, moi aussi je suis black ». C'est rare que tu vois le blanc qui t'approche, à part du travail dans le sport qui s'approche de toi comme du manière honnête …Même dans le street quand il va te parler comme la façon que je m'habille avec le hat … , crois que yo lui c'est un gangster, c'est un gangster pour sure. Il vient te parler si tu as une cigarette quelque chose comme ca. (Larry; Lines 591 – 611; theme 5; code 5.6)

Mary feels Africans and all Black people face a great amount of stereotyping in the schools. They are considered to be dumb, not do well in school, and only interested in

Music. People, in generally, think that Black students are not interested in school. Her words have been quoted earlier on in this chapter.

Both Larry and Mary agree that there is also lack of role models for young African children and youth. They do not have close family members or African friends who can encourage them to do well in school, to continue with their academic work. Most African parents work on menial labour jobs, which the children do not aspire to, yet there is no one as role models for them to look up to and receive encouragement from.

> …j'ai constaté moi personnellement parce que nous on manque des modèles. On n'a pas des modèles, les seuls gents, les seuls modèles que nous on a, on voit …un chanteur américain, on voit Two Pac, on voit Colby Brian c'est les modèles que nous on voit, on n'a pas comme des modèles intellectuels. Si on a des modèles intellectuels qui peuvent nous motiver, comme tu vois ici, tu vois nos oncles, nos parents, ils travaillent comme à McDonalds, dans les Fort McMurray. Ca c'est pas un modèle, puis je les suivre, je veux le suivre, comme si j'avais un modèle comme Colin Powell, comme des gents qui sont intellectuels you know. Moi je sais ce que les jeunes noires manquent comme tous les gents que je côtois, tous mes amis tout le monde que je côtois, c'est rare que je trouve un noir qui est vraiment motivé à aller loin…
> (Larry; Lines 727 – 736; themes 5, 13; codes 5.6, 13.2)

> ...most of African people that come here, they loosing and they grow up and stuff. They either want to be a rapper or they want to be something. They want to get involved in sports, they don't want anything to do with school because they get, they think they fail. They will not be successful, they're not going to have the chance. That's usually the case. But my case, I mean I saw my parents, my aunt went to university and she is somebody. My brother, probably, though there was racism going on that time,

> he is an engineer now. I mean for me they're my role model ...
> I f I didn't have my brother tell me study hard you can be somebody
> I wouldn't have the confidence. I don't have the confidence if
> somebody is going to tell me you're going to be somebody, study
> hard then that's when I know I am going to be somebody. But if
> you don't have anybody to tell you you gonna be this you know,
> you're a good person just change this and this, just how you're
> going to change at all... (Mary; Lines 714 – 727; themes 5, 13; codes 5.6, 13.2)

Black students have to contend with negative stereotypes from the society and their peers. They face many stereotypes such as, not being intelligent enough to excel in academics, their strengths lie in Music and Sports only, or they are involved in some gangs or drug activities. It may be that they lack role models but these stereotypes are a form of racism in itself. The sociological literature in this field and the community agencies concur with such findings.

Kelly (1998) and hooks (1981) refer to the media as constantly perpetuating negative stereotypes of Black men and women. Yet these are prevalent in schools and the community (Dei et al, 1997; Kelly 1998) which make matters difficult and offensive to Black students. Some of these have already been discussed earlier on in this chapter.

In summary, Alberta has welcomed many refugees from different parts of the world. Currently due to the conflicts around the world, many Africans, Iraqis, Afghanis and other ethnic groups have called this city their new home. All of them face some sort of racism. As the sociological literature indicates, refugee students face discrimination and racism in their local schools. Cultural misunderstandings between Native English speaking students and newcomers have resulted in prejudice and discrimination making life more difficult for refugee students as they also now have to overcome negative attitudes (Olsen 2000, McBrien 2005). In fact Portes and Rumbaut (2001) state that discrimination is the greatest barrier to adaptation. Discrimination often arises from perceiving the members of the new group as a threat due to political and social events and attitudes (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Many new refugees are Muslims and many

individuals in the West equate their faith with terrorism because of political events and media images. These stigmas, associated with religion, cannot often be hidden by the youth because they wear the hijab (the head scarf), fast in the month of Ramadhan or look for secluded places to offer their prayers (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995; McBrien, 2005). Alberta studies show that refugees have experienced some sort of discrimination and racism in the province. These have been manifested through avoidance, ostracization and negative attitudes (Abu Laban et al.,1999). Desa (2007) also states that refugee students segregate themselves into cultural cliques for fear of discrimination and rejection. Many children are bullied and victimized from elementary to high schools and are not accepted due to their culture/baggage/ identity and color.

Community agencies also feel that racism is prevalent in the schools. In fact, they seem to be more aware of the gravity of this racism than the students themselves. Agencies say that teachers do not have the skills to deal with racism and conflict resolution. Students are bullied, teased because of their English or accent. Professional development on racism is a low priority in schools; in fact they are hostile to this suggestion. One in ten students experience racially motivated violence in schools, while one in three witnesses such racially motivated violence (NAARR, 2004). There is also subtle racism with many cliques in the schools according to different religions and races present, exclusion from groups, the lack of friends from other racial groups. Superficial differences of dance, diet and dress are recognized within schools by holding special events, however more needs to be done to combat racism with professional development of teachers and in depth education for pre-service teachers. Furthermore, students who are in ELL programs do not have many opportunities to mingle with native English speakers, thus face an even greater barrier of social interaction due to their limited English skills. Some agencies have been working hard in promoting positive race relationships in schools, but have found many road blocks. Individual teachers, non governmental organizations and settlement agencies are left alone to work individually with students or schools as there is also a lack of a coherent provincial governmental approach to support anti racism education.

Conclusion

The findings discussed both in Chapters Three and Four show the perspectives of the refugee students attending various high schools in the city. These school experiences and perspectives have occurred within the context of their schools as operated by various school boards following Alberta Education guidelines. The findings from the sociological literature and community agencies have also been woven into these chapters in order to give the reader a more holistic perspective. Findings are organized into two main sections, the internalist and the externalist aspects. Within the internalist aspects, school organization and processes of schooling are discussed. These results show that some refugee students are succeeding in school while others are not. Learning of the English language is the most difficult aspect of schooling whether the students know the language or not upon arrival to Canada. Generally there is a great lack of support for refugee students in the mainstream program with the exception of a few good hearted teachers who take time to help students. Teachers normally have lower expectations of refugee students. They also have to deal with issues of Racialization from both teachers and peers. From the externalist aspects, the findings show that the student's cultural capital plays a major role in their successes at school. Their support systems of parents, settlement agencies and friends are useful, often necessary for their survival in the city. Refugee students show that issues of racialization, gender and the intersections of these along with stereotypes of racialized students are prevalent in their lives, including schools. The meanings and implications of these findings are discussed in further details in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Reflection

Over the past four chapters, we have been discussing a study that was conducted to hear the voices of the refugee youth as they set out to achieve an education. In line with my earlier literature review I found that refugee students who were interviewed in my research project highlighted complex lives indicating a combination of success and challenges in their educational experiences. These are due to a variety of factors including the organization and set up of the schools, as well the personal dispositions of the students themselves. Moreover, issues of marginalization, racialization, and gender between individuals and within systems were revealed. A discussion and reflection over these concerns are included in this chapter under the topics of Processes of Acculturation, Interactions with the Education System, Racialization and Stereotyping. Detailed discussions of these topics and subtopics show the interactions and relationships between these various factors. These topics and findings above have brought about a shift in sociological paradigm to a Conflict paradigm. Wotherspoon (2004) explains this approach as

> A contrasting approach to social analysis depicts conflict and struggle as normal features of societies. Societies, particularly, if they are relatively complex in nature, are likely to contain a diversity of different collectivities and subgroups, each with specific needs and interests. Although overt conflict is not always present or apparent social change is driven by the demands and actions of social groups to have their interests represented and their needs met. The task of sociology, in this view, is to identify and analyze the social circumstances that give rise to each set of interests (p. 8)

Processes of Acculturation

According the literature review in Chapter One, group and individual supports are critical in acquiring the skills necessary to adjust to the new host country. With the

students that I interviewed, I saw that most of them had acculturated to the Canadian culture through the support of their ethnic communities (i.e. Somali, Afghan, Congolese communities and mosques), and the support of settlement agencies. The youth workers from settlement agencies belonged to similar ethnic backgrounds, had an awareness of the refugees' cultures, values and languages and thus were able to provide appropriate types of support. These students also had friends from their own ethnic community for additional support. Mary and Diana are the exceptions to this case. Mary had a mixed set of friends, but none from her community. She is successful and has acculturated well due to the support of her family, friends and settlement agencies. On the other hand, Diana has little family support and a small circle of friends, however she has received strong support from settlement agencies. She seems to have acculturated well, yet her interview seems to show a taste of bitterness and disappointment.

Without the support of friends, ethnic communities, families and settlement agencies the youth can have a negative acculturation process. This is described as spiral assimilation due to poverty and living circumstances. In this study, monetary issues were briefly discussed. Other than Diana, the refugee students who were part of this study did not have to work. Even though Alfie worked, he did not use his money for household expenses nor did his mother ask him for it. All the parents or older siblings were able to provide for their families. However there is also an opposite reality to this situation. From conversations with settlement agencies, stakeholders and refugees themselves, many youth drop out of school to provide for their families after the federal government's financial support runs out in one year from their arrival to Canada. Others work full time in the evenings while going to school in the daytime leaving them no time for school homework. This, in turn, impedes their success in school. Many of the refugee youth and their families are in 'survival mode', words that I have heard both from agency workers and stakeholders. Also in the case of Diana, even though she has some monetary assistance, she still has to work thus has not been able to spend as much time for studies. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs points out, people need to ensure their basic needs of food, shelter, security and belonging are met before they can attempt to self actualize through their education (Maslow, 1943).

Refugee students and their families need to be able to live and have their basic needs provided for before they can think of education. Some parents are not able to work due to their limited or accented English resulting in their youth working. There are also many single parent refugee families (mostly mothers) where the adult is not working due to childcare responsibilities. This leaves the task of earning a livelihood again to the youth. Only after having sufficient income can the youths turn their attention to education. By earning a livelihood and going to school time, youth may not have the energy to devote quality time to education. They soon reach the age of twenty, or are used to working that the path to upgrading seems daunting, expensive and a far fetched goal.

If this poverty is compounded with lack of success, lack of support from communities and agencies, the youth can spiral into criminal activities. They feel marginalized through rejection of the majority culture, crime, unemployment and conflict. The settlement agencies mention that these types of negative assimilation have occurred among refugee youth population here in the city. My study did not show such findings however my sample of students was limited to those still attending school, not those who had left.

The students who continue to attend schools face various other challenges in their interactions with the education systems which are discussed in the next section.

Interactions with the Education System

Analysis of my data reveals that in terms of their interactions with the education systems various factors are evident in the successes and challenges of refugee youth, such as cultural capital and student success, power, knowledge and normalization of English, vocabulary, and issues of marginalization.

Cultural Capital and Student Success

The majority of the students interviewed were doing better in school academically than I expected. This surprised me a great deal as I was expecting much greater struggles

with the education system. However, upon further analysis I began to realize that those who are doing well in Canadian schools are often those who have learned a degree of English prior to arriving in the country. These more academically successful students had studied in English medium schools prior to their arrival in Canada giving them the advantage of spending less or no time in ESL programmes. Students with previous English language skills were able to go into regular programming and begin the important task of successful graduation by age twenty. Such students had what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1973) identifies as cultural capital. Knowing the English language, gives some students the advantage over other non English speaking refugee students. Cultural capital as discussed by Bourdieu (1973) states that cultural differences between status groups are based on their differences in education, occupation and wealth. The resources, that these families had in the form of education, occupation or wealth, enabled them to procure for their children opportunities to learn English. Lamont and Lareau (1988) defined cultural capital as "institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high-status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion" (p.156). When I examine the individual students and their interview narratives it is evident that three of the most successful students can be regarded as coming from higher status group. Both Mary's parents and Daniel's parents could afford to give their children a personal tutor and a second school placement respectively. Similarly, Alfie had two sisters earning a livelihood allowing him to attend a Pakistani English medium school which was more expensive than a regular school for Afghan refugees. This economic capital that some families possessed was thus translated into cultural capital (learning English) that could then be cashed in on arrival in Canada. As Weininger and Lareau (2007) argue,

> From this vantage point, the role of schools in society – despite the well-intentioned beliefs of educators – too often offers an advantage to children from the dominant class as they approach school with a set of powerful, albeit largely invisible, cultural advantages which they draw on to comply with standards for school success. (p. 892)

By way of contrast, the two students whose narratives reveal that they have greater struggles in school are those who came to Canada without any prior English language,

without the cultural capital of knowing the host language. For these struggling students their families were not able to afford them this advantage due to lack of finances or other resources. I regard Brian's and Diana's families as not having had the resources or opportunities to provide a wider education for their children in their early years. At times, however, privileged economic status was not enough to guarantee a successful educational experience. For example, Larry also has difficulties in school, yet he knows the French language and comes from a high status family. Many of the French speaking adult refugees hold degrees of higher education from their heritage countries (Ngala, 2005) and belong to a higher economic class in their own countries. Despite this cultural capital from their parents, why are these students not doing well in school? Are there other factors that are impeding student learning? This case is discussed further, in the section 'Issues of Marginalization'.

Students with an advantage of cultural capital garnered through knowing the host language when they enter Canadian schools have been more successful than those students without this cultural capital. As learning the host language aligns strongly with school success, the opposite is also true. Those who do not have this cultural capital have challenges in learning English which is discussed in the next section.

Power, Knowledge and Normalization of English

English as a Second language (ESL) is a program that is offered to all students entering schools without sufficient English language proficiency. Students who are new to Canada and are not fluent in the English language are provided with a transitional program that is:

> ... designed to equip them with the necessary language skills and understanding of the Canadian way of life, so that they may participate fully in our education system and become productive and contributing members of Albertan and Canadian society...Its function is to facilitate the integration of the student into the regular school program at the earliest possible opportunity (Alberta Education, 2008)

This programming occurs in special ESL classes at the high school level and in integrated classrooms in elementary and junior high schools. The term 'regular' has been often used by the students and it is interesting to note its meaning in the context of ESL programming.

The students who are not in the ESL program follow the school's regular or mainstream programming. Does that mean that the students who are in ESL are in the 'irregular' programming and somehow don't fit? For example, Brian was extremely excited that he had 'graduated' from the ESL program and now he was 'regular'. "I'm a regular ...all my subjects right now, its all regular, not ESL anymore" (Brian; Lines 333-341; theme 6; code 6.2). Mary used the word 'normal', interpreting that ESL is 'not normal'. "I went straight to Grade 8 and I took Grade 8 stuff, I took the normal stuff" (Mary; Lines 83 – 84; theme 6; code 6.2). The interpretation of the term ESL to be perhaps irregular and abnormal may be stemming from the negative connotations that anything that is not 'regular' is not valued, is not part of the norm. As Derwing et al. (1999) suggests, teachers teaching ESL are often viewed as a "baby-sitter" or "... they [the teachers] do not want to be designated as ESL because it equals stupid..." (p. 541). If you are a student in the ESL program, it is assumed that you are not intelligent because you do not know English. As Brian says, "... like your English is weak, they think that you are kind of dumb, honestly, 'cause you, you don't have, you don't know the English... (Brian; Lines 563 – 564; themes 6, 5; codes 6.2, 5.6).

Moreover, teachers' negative feelings towards the ESL program transcend into some negative attitudes towards the students. Through teacher-student interactions, and the usual isolation of ESL students in their own classrooms, the students would often not feel part of the school. They realize that there is another part of the school that they need to be at, the part of the school that will teach them the necessary courses to graduate, the necessary course to be "normal". ESL classes are then perceived to be like a prison, that the students are waiting to leave in order to be challenged by the outside world. Thus they are happy to leave the ESL classes and be 'regular' and 'normal', and finally achieve what they were meant to do. In a study, "Reconstructing Drop Out", by George Sefa Dei

et al. (1997), the students mention feeling 'trapped' in a classroom when you know much of the material but because of linguistic differences you are not able to move on. These linguistic norms that are developed according to the cultural standards of the Anglo, white, middle class are then applied to immigrant/refugee students who are expected to conform (Kelly, 2006). Thus schools can be regarded as a site of cultural and social reproduction (Oakes & Lipton, 2003) and access to English language is one of the mechanisms of such processes of reproduction (Wotherspoon, 2004). Cultural reproduction has been defined as "Recognition that, while education contributes to ongoing social inequalities, it does so through cultural and social practices as well as economic requirements" (Wotherspoon, 2004, p. 51). Social reproduction also contributes to social inequalities, and is defined as "The process by which social structures and systems of inequality are maintained over time" (Wotherspoon, 2004, p. 241). Moreover, one can draw on Michel Foucault (1979, 1990) here and his conceptualization of the ways in which power and knowledge work to construct and categorize people as objects. Power and knowledge become intertwined through processes of normalization that construct some students as intelligent and others as not intelligent. Students are expected to follow educational norms as set out by the schools. If they are unable to meet these requirements due to their differences or gaps in their past education, or the use of Eurocentric curriculum, the students are then punished through the forms of failures in tests and streaming. These individuals are then marginalized and seen as deficient even though they may be very capable in other knowledge systems which are not considered official or deemed 'true' or 'real' by the schools. This is further discussed in the section where issues of marginalization are examined.

Students who are registered in mainstream English courses also find them challenging, especially understanding text through high vocabulary. This is discussed further in the next section.

English Language and Vocabulary

Students who managed to graduate out of the ESL program into mainstream classes of English indicated that their greatest struggle within this subject was

vocabulary. Mary, Alfie, and Brian all mentioned difficulties in this area. Vocabulary development has been strongly linked to reading comprehension (Mosher 1999; Nagy 2007). A person cannot understand the text if he or she does not understand the words in it. The proportion of difficult words in a text is a good predictor of text difficulty. Thus the reader's vocabulary knowledge is an important predictor of text comprehension (Anderson & Freebody 1981; Nagy 2007). The lack of vocabulary also affects areas of knowledge in other subject areas. All science and social textbooks, for example, are specialized in their subject areas and their vocabulary is often difficult. Even though vocabulary development occurs in language classes, there is room for such vocabulary development in all subject areas of the curriculum.

With an increasing number of refugee and immigrant students entering the school system with their diverse educational, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, one can predict that they will struggle with vocabulary development. If a child has not reached an age appropriate minimum level of English proficiency, then there is a great likelihood that his reading comprehension and vocabulary development are lower than those of his native English speaking peers (Snow & Kim, 2007). Sociological research also shows that minority students and mainstream English speaking children are both able to use language appropriately. However, making meaning out of unfamiliar words depends largely on student background, thus books that draw solely on the majority cultures disadvantage the minority children as they do not represent their cultures and experiences (DeVilliers & Johnson 2007). Thus the Eurocentric curriculum, in this case, is a disadvantage to refugee students. Vocabulary expansion is a crucial area of growth and development for all ESL students in achieving success in all their subject areas. For example, Alfie speaks about his English teacher spending time instructing him on the required vocabulary, he was then able to improve his grades and be successful in the Provincial Achievement Test in English 30-1.

Thus vocabulary acquisition in all subject areas is an important factor in the refugee students' confidence in learning and doing well in not only mainstream English

courses but in all subjects. A stronger vocabulary will improve students' comprehension of texts and concepts which in turn show progress in school performance.

Beyond vocabulary, refugee student face further difficulties in schools due to the school systems' economic and organizational factors. These are discussed in the next section.

Economic and Organizational Factors

Sociologists have long argued that the organizational aspects of schooling affect the ability of the students to learn in the most effective way (Wotherspoon, 2004; Moore, 2004). So it is that lack of economic resources and certain organizational aspects, including the lack of teacher support that affects the experiences of refugee students.

Lack of teacher support. ESL classes, with their own program of studies, are offered at the high school level. Most elementary and junior high schools do not offer separate ESL classes and the students are integrated into the regular grades, taking the same subjects as their peers. This is an excellent way for the ESL students to have constant contact with Canadian born peers, and thus learn the language while socially interacting with other students. The drawback to this practice is the lack of guarantee that a young ESL student in elementary or junior high school will receive the necessary instruction and support to learn the English language at a proficient level in comparison to his peers. Even though Alberta Education has set guidelines in implementing ESL instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 9, at this present moment, ESL instruction and support within an elementary and junior high school is left to the discretion of the school administration. If the school administrator sees that ESL as an important area in which to invest time and money then the appropriate human resources are made available to provide support to the classroom teacher. This support can come in the form of a teaching assistant or a resource teacher working specifically with ESL students individually or in small groups. But it is not mandatory for any school administrator to provide such support to the classroom leaving the teachers to provide appropriate programming for all their students on their own. Teachers are very busy programming for a wide variety of

students in their classrooms, and meeting all curriculum content. Moreover if they teach Grades 3, 6, 9, or 12 they have the added pressure of ensuring their students do well in their Provincial Achievements Tests. They may not be able to fully assist the ESL students in their classrooms. (I have seen some elementary classrooms that have twenty four students, consisting of four to five ESL students, some academically delayed students and fifteen other students to whom the teacher instructs all subjects.) The teacher is able to design specific programs for all students but time does not allow him/her to carry them all out simultaneously. Support from other people is needed to do individual and small group work but such support is often not available. Sometimes, a parent volunteer will come in and assist for a few days. While parent volunteers play an important role in the schools, language skills should not have to rely on such volunteers coming occasionally to the school. Thus proficient certified teachers are feeling very frustrated as they are not able to provide appropriate assistance to their students. From my own personal experience as well, it is extremely difficult to teach all students at their various ability levels when the teacher must also cater to students with severe disabilities, mild cognitive delays and / or ESL needs without extra assistance in the classroom, and with further expectations that the whole curriculum is covered. Moreover, the final report of "Review of ESL K-12 Program Implementation in Alberta" (Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006) states that 64% of school teachers in Alberta do not have any training in teaching ESL students, and only 14% of the teachers they surveyed had some training in teaching ESL students.

All schools are mandated to provide appropriate resources for all students to succeed, including ESL students, however according to the ESL Guide to Implementation (Alberta Education, 2007), the decision of providing classroom support for ESL students is entrusted to local administrators, often to the detriment of the same students that they wish to serve. As some of these children move on to junior high and high school without a strong base in the English language, will they, then, be able to complete English 30-1 or English 30-2 successfully in order to graduate and attend a post secondary school? Or will they give up school at the age of 16 due to their frustration in language learning or from general lack of support that the high school students talk about? As Scoppio (2002)

reveals, a Canadian school trustee admitted that the lack of progress and concern in the area of teaching minority students is partly due to the fact that their parents do not advocate effectively for their children in a politically driven culture.

School to work transitions. At the present time, planning is underway to cater to those students who have to leave school at the age of twenty without a high school diploma. One of the schools where some of the interviewees attend will be offering a Certificate of High School Achievement program to such students, which includes lower levels of English, Math, Science and Social Studies along with other courses leading to a variety of trades (auto mechanics, aesthetics, horticulture foods, human care, to name a few). Some details of the Knowledge and Employability program were discussed in Chapter One, and are also made available to interested individuals by Alberta Education (Alberta Education, 2008). This program will include English and other core courses at lower levels as well as work experience coordinated by the school and community businesses for students to acquire some knowledge and skills necessary to be employed and maintain an entry level job in their chosen trade. Examples of these partnerships being developed between one high school, a local college and a settlement agency offer refugee students training in warehousing and nurses' aide courses. The rationale for this development is to give the students some means of employment and livelihood for the future even if they do not complete the requirements of an Alberta High School Diploma. The rationale is also that they can always complete the requirements for a high school diploma at a later date through upgrading.[12] The question that I ask is why not raise the age cap for students who are interested, who are serious and able to complete their diploma requirements so they may choose a trade through a post secondary institution. In this manner, they are able to be employed with higher paying wages and opportunities for advancement, rather than working at low entry jobs without a high school diploma. The

[12] This reminds me of the strategies that the past white philanthropists employed along with Booker T. Washington to train young black men with practical skills for employment and acceptance in the white community as opposed to W.E.B. Dubois who called for education for youth according to ability (Waite, 2001).

Certificate of High School Achievement is still another means to stream students because they do not meet the standardized norms set by the schools. Schools are pushing students out of high school in two to three years by having them complete the Knowledge and Employability courses and setting them up for work, yet giving them the hope that one day they can still complete their high school diploma. High school completion through upgrading at a later time is more time consuming, expensive and more difficult to complete as an adult than as a youth due to family responsibilities. This economic based strategy can be regarded as closely aligned with the neo liberal ideology of encouraging refugee youth to acquire human capital resources for the purpose of advancing capitalism. In the words of Dave Hill (2006), Professor of Education Policy at the University of Northampton, " [the capitalist class]... perceive to be their [the schools] "traditional role" of producing passive worker/citizens with just enough skills to render themselves useful to the demands of capital" (p. 11). It is also the neoliberal attitude that the state cannot afford to offer a broad range of programs and services in public enterprises like education. Programs such as ESL, multicultural education and other programs are singled out as 'frills' that are too costly, socially divisive and counterproductive in a highly competitive economic environment (Wotherspoon, 2004). Educational institutions still tend to serve as 'gate keepers' to "success" rather than as facilitators to economic and social mobility because they restrict lower class students from benefitting from formal education. Education favours the privileged and streams out the disadvantaged, causing persistent rigid stratification (Forcese, 1997).

To this effect, Alberta Education is trying to provide a compensatory program of 'Knowledge and Employability' to students who will not graduate by age twenty, while the dominant group is identified with programs of excellence! This is surely not equity for ALL students. Unfortunately policy makers have created a false dichotomy between equity and quality. They feel that both cannot be achieved simultaneously, and aim at achieving one at the expense of the other (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Thus compensatory programs are developed to assist marginalized students but these programs are far behind in excellence to the programs offered to the privileged students. This is their preferred choice rather than educating all students to their abilities even if it means an increase in

the education budget and improvement in the processes of schooling. At this present time, with decentralized monetary budgets policies of some school boards, the principals of the schools are under great pressure to balance their budgets that the dollar takes priority over student needs. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, students will often not receive the assistance and support necessary for their learning as the school cannot afford to hire personnel to support them.

Some school boards offer support to teachers through the use of consultants and in-service workshops. Some boards have set English Language Learners (ELL) consultants to assist teachers in their work. An ELL center, among other services, offers comprehensive assessments of ELL students which high schools use as a stepping stone to teach their ESL students. It is offered to younger divisions as well but again at the discretion of the administration for allocating the money for such assessments. However, according to a stakeholder, the center is so behind in fulfilling requests from schools that the teachers end up doing their own informal assessment before a formal one is done, just as Alfie described in Chapter Three. Through the Public School Board's news bulletin and in-service calendar, the center provides support groups and offer workshops for teachers of ESL students. This is done after school hours and on a voluntary basis, leaving concerned teachers with extra meetings and seminars after school. Some workshops or seminars are offered during school hours but with an added expenditure of hiring a substitute teacher. But what about the teachers who do not have the time for meetings or workshops after school hours, or perhaps a lack of concern for ESL students, or would rather spend their allocated dollars for other types of workshops? The ELL students are then again the ones to lose out.

Looking at schools boards outside of this Albertan urban center, we find that the Toronto District School Board offers a wide range of services to newly arrived immigrant or refugee families. Their services seem much more appropriate and inclusive of settlement and community organizations. For example, their assessment and placement services begin for all ESL students as young as 11, or in grade 7, while in this city, we seem to provide these specialized ESL services from high school only. There are a handful of junior high schools offering ESL programming but it is not offered at every

junior high school. In the majority of junior high schools and all elementary schools, it is left to the discretion of individual school administrators to decide whether such specialized services or support systems will be offered in their school depending on the school budgets or the administrators' own viewpoints. The education systems need to carefully look at the challenges these children and their teachers face and continue making appropriate changes for the success of this future workforce, examining the best practices of other school boards. Other schools, like the Francophone school, also follow similar practices of school organizations and work to school transitions that marginalize refugee students. These are discussed in the section below.

Issues of Marginalization

As discussed earlier in this chapter, schools marginalize refugee students who do not 'fit into' the norms set by the schools. These norms set the standards to which all students must adhere, standards that are set against the Euro Canadian middle class society to which the refugee students I interviewed (and most refugee students) do not belong. If these standards or norms are not achieved, they are streamed into lower levels of learning and marginalized for their lack of knowledge. These issues of marginalization are present in the Anglophone systems through the Knowledge and Employability route discussed earlier. They also continue in the Francophone system as refugee students are also having academic difficulties in those schools. As Larry explains, students are not given the opportunity to learn previous material or the background knowledge and yet are expected to keep up with the classroom pace without any extra support of pull outs or individual time. Further conversations with various stakeholders, students and settlement agencies led to the discovery that students who are not able to keep up with the current curriculum content of their grade level are sent to an alternative program, Ajax, where they are instructed lower levels of Math, Francais, Etudes Sociales and Science. The purpose of this alternative program is not necessarily to have the child catch up and join his peers in the school at grade level. The students who attend this program on a full time basis are streamed into lower levels of knowledge that will consequently lead to lower level positions in the work force. They do not attend mainstream classes within the school

nor graduate from high school as their learning gaps are addressed with the lower streamed education to become employable in menial labour entry jobs. The majority of refugee students in the Francophone schools are from Africa which further explains Larry's comments that most of the students in Ajax are Black. These students, unable to achieve the norms set by the schools, are being classified, categorized and marginalized. They are being steered towards low paying jobs, living in the margins of the society, reproducing the socio-economic status of the society (Dei et al., 1997).

From their website, it seems that the Francophone school offers three levels of programming, students are tracked either for university, for college or for the world of work. From the viewpoints of stakeholders and settlement agencies, higher levelled courses are available only to those who can keep up with the pace and material. Even though the parents of the refugee students have high educational backgrounds, the refugee students who continue studying in the school's mainstream program are having difficulties keeping up with the curriculum, resulting in low achievement and low motivation. Some highly motivated students, like Larry, are working very hard to keep up with the pace and curriculum, are still experiencing problems. Other Black students are doing minimal school work, feeling discouraged and marginalized by the school system. Occasionally, an African refugee student will make a detour to the alternate program to redo a failed course and then rejoin the school's mainstream program but these are few. As Dei et al. show (1997), very few black students are found in math and science classes, more black students are streamed in lower classes and they seldom seem to be encouraged. Dei et al. (1997) also state many possible reasons for Black students' disengagement from schools, including the failure of the education system to meet the needs of the Black youth, and the Eurocentric curriculum. Moreover, this study has found that home, school and society are all implicated in this process of disengagement from school in varying degrees. In this case, the norms that have been set by the school are difficult to achieve without the students being given the opportunity to acquire background knowledge and 'catch up' with their age peers. Consequently the Francophone school system needs to provide a means for the students to 'catch up' thus ensuring that African refugee students are more successful in school and subsequently in

the society. Another consequence of marginalizing refugee students is their high rate of drop out, leaving high school before its completion. This is discussed further in the next section.

Leaving School Early

According to the literature review and settlement agencies, many ESL students leave school early before completing high school. Included among these ESL students are also refugee students. The rate of this drop out is as high as 74% in Alberta in comparison to 35% from the native English speaking population (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Even though the students in my study did not think of dropping out of high school (except Diana), they gave some insight into situations where other students were marginalized and thus dropped out of school.

> Yah, I did [think of dropping out] one time. I was very depressed about my life ... so I decided why go to school ...I realized ... after I grow up, do more things, I'll be somebody tomorrow so I make up my mind and started to go back to school. (Diana; Lines 156 – 170; theme 18; code 18.2)

> ...there's other students ...they in ESL, and they don't think they're going to finish high school. Some things have become difficult for them, and they start hate, hating school, and drop out. (Brian; Lines 963 – 965; theme 18; code 18.1)

> And some of them don't think they will [finish high school], they don't have the encouragement from the teacher, teachers don't encourage them enough, so they drop out. (Daniel; Lines 970 – 971; theme 18; code 18.1)

The students here show that some of the reasons for leaving school early are a lack of encouragement from teachers, a sense of failure of being unable to complete high school, the work being too difficult. These students, unable to keep up with the norms set by the schools and not being encouraged, are feeling marginalized while the school continues its hegemonic practices of the dominant culture (Dei et al. 1997). For most drop outs, these subtle messages of inferiority that they receive from schools have real consequences in their lives. They lead to feelings of depression and fatalism regarding their future (Dei et al., 1997). When students are unable to meet the educational expectations and standards, they become 'silent' as they become discouraged and feel excluded (Wotherspoon, 2004).

This 'self silence' is described as 'symbolic violence' by Bourdieu and Passeron (1979), as students undermine their own capabilities and personalities as they cannot change to achieve conformity.

Another important factor in students leaving school early is that of education gaps caused by students not receiving continuous education. They are absent from schools for a period of time due to instability or migration caused by wars in their heritage countries. This causes gaps in students' education. When they attend Canadian schools, they sometimes feel overwhelmed and unable to keep up that they often drop out of school (Cole, 1998; Derwing et al, 1999). Alfie also brought out an interesting line of reasoning that many countries do not have mandatory education for their children, and their citizens do not send their children to school. Children who do not attend schools in their heritage countries often earn money to help support their families from a young age. When they come to Canada before the age of sixteen, they are expected to attend schools. Schooling may be something they may have never done in their lives thus making it challenging for themselves and their teachers. Many of them do drop out as they do not see the point of continuing their education. The drawback of this practice is that it limits their opportunities for better economic prospects in a country where education is highly valued and necessary for higher social and economic mobility. Thus many refugee youth will have greater difficulties in providing for their families in the future, leading themselves into lower economic strata.

> ...some students, they came from Iran, they came from Tajikistan, every different countries, they were working there. They were like start working from age 14, or 13 because of economic problems. And then they were not interested in school. When they got back to school here in Canada, they didn't know any, not much English, and they were not interested at all going to school as from morning to the afternoon, they were, like, really bored, and they were skipping (Alfie; Lines 476 – 481; theme 18; code 18.1)

McBrien (2005) confirms that there are many other factors that may lead to students dropping out of high school: students' negative self perceptions of their academic abilities, rejection from peers or exhibit antisocial behaviours. These factors were not seen in the six out of seven students I interviewed because these six students are

highly motivated to complete their high school. Diana may be an exception as she is living through difficult circumstances of family upheaval, small circle of friends, monetary pressure. All of these can lead to lower motivation in completing high school.

Racialization and Stereotyping

Historically Canadian immigration has been racialized so those of Western European descent were regarded more favourably than those from countries traditionally "deemed unsuitable" (Palmer, 1982). This situation began to change slightly with the development of the United Nations' 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the move by the Canadian government to begin bringing people into the country for humanitarian reasons. These refugees were individuals who were displaced due to wars or other crisis. This last set of people coming into Canada has very different needs. Not only do they come from various parts of the world but their life experiences are also varied. Some have endured wars and atrocities in their heritage countries while others have lived in refugee camps for several years. Unlike immigrants who have arrived in Canada as skilled workers, professionals, entrepreneurs or investors, very few of these refugees come to Canada already speaking the host language. They are often neither highly educated nor wealthy. Continuing this pattern of movement away from a racialized immigration policy, we find that since 1967, due to economic reasons and expediency, Canada has began to accept more people from Asia, India and other countries where the physical characteristics of the newcomers are different from the traditional white settlers dominant in this former colony.

Racism continues to be present and enduring in Canada, including in the realm of education (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Below is a discussion of the systemic racism found in the operations of the schools as well in gender relations and stereotyping of students.

Systemic Racism

Racism continues to persist in education, within the operations of the school systems, the normalization of standards, providing inequality and inequity to many of its disadvantaged students, including refugee students.

On the whole students indicate that individual teachers and peers are friendly and helpful. The narratives indicate that on an individual level of social interaction it seems that some efforts are made and some concern is expressed about the success of refugee youth. The problem that arises more directly within the narratives is that the needs of the refugee students are not being met through a systemic lack of recognition by an educational structure that is lauded as one of the best in the world (Alberta Government, 2004). How can this highly reputable provincial education system not be working well for refugee newcomers?

Historically, Canada has been accepting immigrants from European countries who over a long period found it easier, through name change and learning English, to assimilate into the Anglo Saxon culture (Shepard, 2008). However with the changing trends of greater immigration from Asia, Middle East and Africa, schools have made minimal amounts of adaptation or accommodation for the needs of these non-European newcomers, thus it is of little surprise that the students are not doing well. The schools are coming to a very slow realization that these students need greater amount of accommodation and adaptation for success. Thus these problems are not rooted so much with individual teachers not wanting these students to be successful but the whole 'system' of teaching needs a major overhaul. Schools have begun to realize that settlement agency workers need to work hand in hand with the teachers to provide students with services of counselling for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, language interpreter services, cultural competencies as all of these factors interfere with student learning (Cole 1998; McBrien 2005; Chung et al. 2000; Morland 2005). Schools with a higher refugee population are slowly realizing that they need to change their ways and methods of teaching to enable them to reach the students. They are now finally allowing youth workers from settlement agencies to work closely with the schools, assisting

students, teachers and administrators. However these support people are not employed by the school boards but rather work for settlement agencies providing support to the schools. Schools with small number of refugee populations, mostly elementary and junior high, have little information on the needs of such students. Even though the teachers do their best, they are often unable to provide the best services available. When crisis or problems arise, settlement agencies are called in for support, but these agencies find that the school has attempted to make very few accommodations for that troubled student beforehand. The schools expect that the child will adapt to the school, adapt to the values of the Euro-Canadian middle class, without even questioning this cultural hegemony and its effects on those who cannot identify with it. From my own personal experiences, when these children are in the classroom, there is little indication that the teacher understands the cultural nuances or lifestyles of these children. The simple expectation of assimilating into the system reflects an assumption from the education system itself that the norms of the dominant culture will be followed. When special days at the school come around, no accommodations are made to communicate with the parents in heritage languages for their involvement in school, or even for their dietary needs. It is assumed that everyone will follow the standard set by the school, even if it is offensive to some families (Ramirez, 2003). These practices marginalize students' cultures and identities.

This attitude of not recognizing the racialized differences between students, the attitude of being 'colour blind' (Kelly1998; Dei1997) tells the child that their differences do not matter, that there is no space in the schools for you, your thoughts or your heritage to be recognized. This process of marginalization, of making students invisible, shows that the only culture and knowledge that counts is the dominant one, the Anglo Saxon middle class culture, the Eurocentric culture. As a non white child growing up in a system that is white dominated, he can be seen as an 'other', of not belonging to that European culture (Kelly, 1998). As Ghosh and Abdi (2004) state: "Schools actually reinforce existing inequalities when they do not allow for social differences that affect learning and achievement" (p. 51).

The schools are very Eurocentric and everyone is expected to adapt to this 'norm'. The spoken language, the holidays, the celebrations, the concerts, the arts, the food are all geared towards this one Eurocentric culture that there seems no room for other voices, other means of doing things. It is very difficult for a person to introduce something different from another culture to the school, to do something outside the 'norm', to have a different voice. The creation of 'norms', as explained by Michel Foucault, is a means to integrate and control teachers and students (Jardine, 2005), as a means to prohibit or allow certain thoughts, "to ... dictate what our thoughts and actions should be ..." (p.66)

There are many 'norms' that a student needs to adhere to in a school. The norm of attaining a certain proficiency level at core subjects as determined by the Provincial Achievement Tests. Otherwise the child is labelled 'at risk' (Kelly, 2006). Norms of behaviour are to be met otherwise the child is labelled as a 'behaviour problem'. All these norms have been established using the criteria of a middle class Euro-Canadian culture to which these children do not belong to. All these expectations are put on him yet the assistance is not given to him to adjust. Moreover the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is not often recognized and professional multilingual psychological assistance is not available to him. Teachers do not know much about the students' cultures, languages, ways of life, holidays as these do not matter to them. The children are 'invisible' unless they resist such 'norms', then they are labelled deviant. The books used for language arts, or subjects taught all have a base that is Eurocentric. The histories, the sciences, the 'classic' books are all centered on the European, North American white culture. These 'norms' make the school and the system racist as there is no room for the 'other' (Kelly 1998; Dei 1997). Thus an antiracist education needs to be adopted by every school. A brief discussion on this topic can be found in Chapter Six, Conclusion and Recommendations.

Students' interactions among themselves and their parents show a degree of difference between boys and girls. The parents treat the two genders differently which confines some of the girls' experiences in and outside of school while the boys are given ample freedom. This is discussed in further details in the next section.

Interracial Gender Relations

To shed more light on the issue of interracial gender relationships, I spoke further to parents and stakeholders. This topic was not included in my interview questions, but was brought about by Larry as it relates to his school experiences. He explained to me that young Black girls are more protected and sheltered by their parents that they are not allowed to go out on dates as much as the boys are. The Black boys, on the other hand, have very few, if any restrictions from their parents regarding dates and relationships. If Black girls are not available or have too many restrictions (as Larry confirmed), then Black boys go out with White girls. Why do White girls choose to go out with Black boys? Often it is a novelty, as a parent said, they are curious to find out if the age old stereotype of Black men having more sexual prowess is true or not. They want to perhaps experiment. Some of these interracial relationships last a long time but others are short lived, often broken up from pressures of White parents. As for pressures from the Black parents, the boys are not restricted at all. These interracial relationships seem to have been the cause of many tensions and conflicts in the school between Black and White girls. Historically, tensions between Black and White women have existed, as discussed earlier in Chapter Four.

Further to the White women 'stealing' the Black men for personal relationships, White women have also shown strong anti-black sentiments towards Black women rather than Black men (hooks, 1981). The prejudices that White women have demonstrated toward Black women as being morally impure, and were perhaps reluctant to accept them in their social circles for fear of sexual competition with Black men. White women also saw Black women as a direct threat to their social standing as 'virtuous, goddess like creatures' being compared to and standing side by side to women who were 'immoral and licentious' (hooks, 1981, p.131).These age old stereotypes of Black women continue even in schools just as they persist for the all Black students. This is further discussed later in this chapter under 'Stereotyping'

The gender related restrictions can be also seen in the case of Mary and Sam. Mary had revealed in her interview that she was not allowed to go out with her friends

after school hours or weekends. Her parents wanted her to stay home and be involved with the family. She did not spend time after school even for extracurricular activities as she needed to be home. Sam also mentioned not going out with her school friends after school or on weekends. Her reason though was that her friends were working and were also busy with school work. These refugee girls enjoy greater protection from their parents. However in the case of Diana, she is living with her sister without any parental figure to restrict her activities. These restrictions are confining the girls closer to home, confining them from a greater potential for experience and learning through extracurricular activities at school. None of the boys mentioned any such restrictions and seemed to be free to go out as they pleased. No other interviewees brought about a discussion on cross gender issues. Other issues of concerns for students, though, are the stereotypes that they face in the schools which are discussed below.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is an important aspect of racialization and for the students under discussion it emerged most pointedly from students with African origins. Pickering (2008) suggests that stereotypes are simplified, often inaccurate images, with specific meanings which are often held in common by one group of people about another group. Although inaccurate, these images and representations are formed in people's minds through the media, popular culture, and films. Larry, one of the interviewees, describes some of these common stereotypes such as those of criminality, gang membership or being involved in drugs. Stereotypes are founded from an 'us/them' dichotomy that can help maintain existing structures of power, order, and control, or help reproduce and perpetuate inequality and oppression (Pickering, 2008). Thus the Black youth face on a daily basis a stereotype of dishonesty and criminality. As Kelly (1998) asserts they are always 'under the gaze' of others, as described by Foucault where the people being monitored are in a continuous, unending gaze, that watches for disorder, anticipating and punishing every crime, where any gesture, comment might be used against them (Jardine, 2005). This perpetuates the power in mainstream society, making it oppressive and unequal for its citizens. Students, then react to these oppressive situations by being silent,

humiliated, feeling deficient and invisible (Ghosh & Abdi 2004). Moreover, the stereotype described by Mary of Black students not being intelligent enough to attend International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement classes, doing only well in music or sports continues to give the Black students a disadvantage. As Dei (1997) states, black students are streamed into lower streams, towards music and sports, very few are seen in science and math classes. Thus students in Dei et al.'s study (1997) recommend that parents need to be vigilant that their children do not fall victim to such streaming and act as their advocates.

Conclusion

The discussions and reflections on the refugee students experiences have been presented within the context of acculturation, interactions within the school systems, racialization and stereotyping. This study has found that students have acculturated to their new country fairly well. They seem to have adopted the processes of Integration (Berry, 2001) where their own ethnic connections remain strong yet they are beginning to venture out to the new host culture. Students who arrived in Canada with the cultural capital of English have succeeded in school academics and are tracked to attend post secondary institutions. Interactions with the school systems show a variety of problems in learning the English language and succeeding in schools. Schools hold great powers in their normalization of English and in setting standards and parameters for the educational advancement of refugee students. These, in turn, marginalize the students as unintelligent, unmotivated and stream them to lower levels of learning. Moreover the twenty years age cap of completing high school sets an extra barrier for these students, pushing them out of high school. These circumstances often lead the students to opt out for the Knowledge and Employability route of acquiring a Certificate of High School Achievement and some minimal courses in a chosen trade to acquire and maintain a low level entry work position. Despite the positive interactions of some teachers, these barriers, along with the issues of racialization and stereotyping leave the students feeling disenfranchised and hurt by their school systems.

Improvements in the school systems are greatly needed to ensure that the large refugee youth population in this city are successful in their education. These successes will in turn bring many benefits to the Canadian economy and minimize the risks of poverty and negative acculturation. These are discussed further in Chapter Six, Conclusion and Recommendations.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, I set out to explore the educational experiences of refugee youth. My primary question has been: What are the refugee students' educational experiences? Subsequently I ask further questions: how do they view their educational experiences in and out of schools, how do their support systems of friends, parents and settlement agencies work, and finally what racial and cultural tensions do they experience as they pursue their education?

Refugees come to Canada from a variety of countries, each having their own set of circumstances that differs from another refugee. Even though my sample of students were from various countries and spoke a variety of languages, they all had common and challenging educational issues to deal with.

Most of the students felt that cultural and racial tensions exist in schools, and are displayed in a variety of ways. Cultural cliques, racial remarks and jokes as well as some violence are always present in their midst. Racism and discrimination have also led to the use stereotypes used by students and at times teachers. These minimize students' self esteem, often turning into anger for some students, and silencing others. This symbolic violence where students are made to feel inadequate, silenced, deficient, unable to meet the standards of the education system but are not able to change themselves, or be recognized for their cultural backgrounds

Key Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from my research entail several key implications for consideration in the development of policy and practice involving refugee students' education.

1. School boards, schools and educators should adopt Anti Racism education to redress and bring equity in education for all students. Anti racism education is defined as:

> an action – oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression. Anti-racism is a critical discourse of race and racism in society and of the continuing racializing of social groups for differential and unequal treatment (Dei, 1996, p. 25).

Anti-racism discusses the issues of race and social difference in terms of power and equity rather than in terms of culture and ethnicity.

As a multicultural society, Alberta schools need to recognize the many cultures and world views that are represented in the society. This recognition needs to go beyond the multicultural days of dance, diet and dress. Every child that enters the school has already an identity that is rooted in his language, culture and beliefs (Kelly, 1998). The child does not come as a blank slate, and over time this identity becomes stronger. The school needs to recognize such identities and not be 'colour blind'.

2. The Alberta curriculum is rooted in Eurocentric histories and ways of knowing (Kelly, 1998). Other perspectives are incorporated but still seen as peripheral. Even though Canada is a multicultural society, the knowledge and viewpoints of those racialized as non white citizens have not been fully represented in the curriculum. There is Black History month or Ramadan month which is acknowledged, but as mere additions to a culture or life style. These histories, practices, viewpoints are still marginalized and are not part of the school culture. The multicultural days when various dances, foods, clothing are displayed by various student groups only serve to essentialize and stereotype them further. The audience may be learning about their culture, but

not their world views or their struggle to survive against domination or other difficulties (Bedard, 2000).

3. Dei (1996) suggests a 'balanced curriculum' rather than an inclusive curriculum whereby additional forms of knowledge that empower minority youth are incorporated so that

> ...students situate themselves and their cultures, histories and experiences in the learning process ... It is a matter of locating students within the context of their own cultural frame of reference so that they may relate socially, politically, ideologically, spiritually and emotionally to the learning process (p.83).

The danger with Eurocentricity, as Dei (1996) argues, is that it is the only 'centre' being taught. It is presented as the only valid knowledge by constantly devaluating and delegitimizing other forms of knowledge. This is prevalent and pervasive in all formal education as one of the major purposes of public education was to assimilate new Canadians. This, however, has only fostered marginalization and fading out of minority students.

4. Systemic racism found in the school systems, including Eurocentricity, should be deconstructed by understanding White dominance and the making of Whiteness. Canadian White identity has been created and continues to develop over histories of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism (Bedard, 2000). It is through these histories that Whiteness has developed an identity of dominance and power, of subjugating and controlling other non white bodies and of being the 'saviour' of non white people. When white teachers use these colonial and imperialistic knowledges and practices in the classrooms, it is devastating to the non white students. There is a great need for time and space for all teachers to deconstruct whiteness and the power privileges that accompany it and that are detrimental to non white students and adults (Bedard, 2000; Schick & St Denis, 2005).

Everyone needs to be treated equitably in their schools. This includes students, staff, curriculum, viewpoints, histories, languages, cultures. This is a tall order thus it is important for all students and teachers to understand the unequal power relations that are caused by this lack of equity and thus a need for Anti Racism education. The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training has already put in place policies of Anti Racism education and ethno cultural equity (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). This means that school boards in Ontario introduced policies to change cultural biases in textbooks, produce a more inclusive curriculum, recruit non-white teachers, ensure appropriate student placements, etc.

Multiple world views need to be incorporated in curricula, understand that knowledges are neither value-free nor context-free. In fact education is a political process, whereby the politics of power create and maintain differences. Education empowers some students through affirmation, disempowers others through experiences of racism and sexism (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Thus the Euro-Canadian cultural bias in the curricula is empowering and affirming students of Euro-Canadian backgrounds while disenfranchising students from other backgrounds and cultures. Thus there is a need for a 'balanced curriculum' within the Anti Racism Education framework to be incorporated in schools.

5. It is also vitally important, wherever possible, to provide multilingual services in school for newsletters, information leaflets sent home and parent teacher interviews (Cole, 1998). Moreover, studies have concluded that parental involvement in school has a positive impact on children's academic achievement.

Government Policies, School Organizations and Structure

6. Many of the difficulties that refugee students face are due to the organizations and structures of the school. Education for refugee students, like all other

students, must become a priority. Education cannot be allowed to sway to the changing winds of political power. Funds for special programs must be made available all the time. Assistance for all students who are struggling in English or other mainstream courses should be made available. All ESL students, including refugee students, at the elementary and junior high students must have a guarantee that extra assistance will be provided to them in English and other core courses to ensure that they are also being successful. This extra assistance can not be left to the discretion of a school administrator but must be mandated by the provincial government.

7. Similarly, students entering high school with significant gaps in education must be allowed to enrol in special programs allowing him/her to catch up to their peers and then join the mainstream education. These students should not be streamed to lower levels, but allowing them the opportunity to succeed academically. The opportunity for success should be made available for all students.

8. Changes to the Alberta Education policy of capping high school education at age 19 can be changed for refugee students who show capacity and interest in achieving their high school diploma. This age cap can be extended to age 21, or allow the students to continue their quest immediately for a high school diploma at a local college at no extra cost. In other words, students can continue to be under the jurisdiction of Alberta Education until age 21 as they complete their high school diploma requirements at a local high school or college. Extra monetary fees or the 12 months waiting time should not apply to them until after age 21. This will allow them a greater opportunity to enter post seeondary education.

9. Many refugee students and their families are experiencing poverty. The youth are busy earning a livelihood to support their families, while simultaneously acquiring an education. It is important that the youth be supported in meeting his/her basic needs of food, shelter, security and belonging as described in

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) so they may concentrate in receiving an education.

10. Science, Math and Social textbooks are specialized in their subject areas and their vocabulary is often difficult. Even though vocabulary development occurs in language classes, time and space must be made available for such vocabulary development in all subject areas of the curriculum.

11. Teachers of all ESL students or struggling readers need to take extra time and effort in developing their students' vocabulary and reading comprehension within the context of the text and to use novel words in a variety of ways to ensure their understanding and usage (Snow & Kim, 2007). Connecting novel words with students' first languages have also been successful.

12. All administration leaders should be also be involved in learning these pedagogies (including Anti-Racism and ESL) and become advocates and mentors for their development in their local schools. The administrators can thus support and encourage schools faculties in the implementation and evaluation of such programs.

13. In the annual satisfaction surveys filled by students, parents and teachers, administrators must include ELL explicitly as an area for evaluation. If it is not made explicit, many refugee or ELL students and parents may not use it as a means to bring forth suggestions and/or grievances.

14. It is also important that schools look at refugee students in a holistic manner. The data in this study showed students experiencing success in sports, being involved in extra curricular activities such as social justice clubs, etc. Refugee students have many strengths to offer to Canadian society. It is important that the schools use these strengths to further, for example, the global quest for basic education around the world. Refugee students can assist in such projects as building schools abroad as they may understand the culture and language of that country. They should not be viewed simply as deficient just because they

are weaker in academics. Attempts must be made to find these strengths and possible areas of success. Part of this process is to show refugee students the means to become more involved in the school culture, in organizing school activities and become part of student leadership. As Sam mentioned, she would love to be involved in student council but did not know how.

15. Moreover, looking at a refugee child holistically involves looking at many other areas such as mental health, finances, family issues that can deter from a child's success in school. If these issues are addressed either by the school, family or social workers, the child will experience success in school. Otherwise, the child will be at risk for school failure.

Preservice and Continuing Teachers

16. The school systems has a low percentage of teachers of non-European descent (Bedard, 2000) that education facilities should proactively seek for educator diversity in ethnicity, culture, gender, socio-economic status and/ or mobility

17. Courses and training on English as a Second Language and Anti- Racism pedagogies must be made mandatory for all preservice and continuing teachers. Moreover, such themes should be pervasive and included in all other preservice courses as well as in training workshops for continuing teachers.

18. All schools should understand the magnitude of cultural competence and be trained in building cultural competence. Cultural blindness only leads to educational inequity. Hanley (1999) describes cultural competence as a painful and lifelong journey in acquiring "the ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization being served" (p. 1). He also stresses that, "...[cultural blindness is] to treat everyone equally, not necessarily to treat everyone with his or her best interests in mind" (p.11).

Partnerships With Other Agencies

19. Refugee students and families arriving in the city have multiple and complex difficulties to overcome. Assistance in overcoming these problems allows the students to concentrate in their education. Thus schools and other agencies should look for ways to build collaborative partnerships with parents, communities, mental health agencies, social services and settlement agencies with the goal and commitment of assisting the students with all of their problems. This holistic perspective, coupled with a clear commitment to equity and multicultural issues will provide the refugee students the means to be successful in his/her education. As Cole (1998) argues, "...supports need to be proactive with a view that individual problems are often a reflection of poor interaction between individual and their environment rather than symptoms of dysfunction" (p.45). Moreover one of the components of Anti Racism education is for teachers to recognize that students, parents, community workers and caregivers as genuine partners in the production and dissemination of school and school knowledge (Dei, 1996).

Suggestions for Further Research

Below are some suggestions for further research in the education of refugee youth.

1. A longitudinal study of refugee youth through school with transitions to post secondary education and work. It is important to see how school education has made an impact in their lives, whether it has continued the social reproduction of the society, or allowed some upward socio-economic mobility.

2. This study has been limited to high school students. Further in-depth study into younger refugee students in elementary and junior high schools would be of

interest to stakeholders in order to gauge their progress through school while being compared to other ESL and mainstream student population.

3. An in-depth study of the programs and services offered to refugee youth in the school systems with an evaluation on the effectiveness of such services and programs. This will then lead to implementing and sharing of best practices in the realm of refugee student education.

4. The present study dealt with refugee students still engaged with the school systems. There are may others who have left the school systems prematurely before graduation. A study of the causes and consequences of the early leavers will be beneficial in improving our education systems and allow for greater success of refugee students still attending our schools.

Concluding Reflections

As I reflect further on the findings of this study and my own personal experiences as an educator, I see a great urgency for all stakeholders to take the matter of successful refugee education seriously. As Canada welcomes greater numbers of people as refugees due to numerous man-made wars and catastrophes in the world, the education system will need to face the crisis that is occurring within it. I feel that it has denied this problem by its present lack of services. The successes of some students are due to their cultural capital provided by their families and a few good hearted teachers. But the education system cannot rely on a few good hearted teachers to make a difference; rather it needs to realize that inequities exist in its organizations, procedures and policies disallowing an equitable education for its students. We must recognize that education is a political process where the politics of power are creating and maintaining differentiation in the education of Canadian youth. It is high time now that the education system and its teachers and other stakeholders begin to discuss the politics of power, the roots and causes of domination, poverty and unequal power relations. The education system as the governing body with its school boards, schools, administrators and teachers must not only change its policies but begin the transformation of its students and future society by

interrogating natural ways of doing things and unveiling systems of power and dominance. For the success of all of its students, the education system needs to uphold true citizenship and social justice.

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Appendix A

Key for Themes and Codes

1 – Age cap

1.1 – not enough time to complete high school

1.2 – enough time to complete high school

2 – Age when students left their countries

3 – Arrival to Canada

4.0 – Changes in School

4.1 – program change

4.2 - cultural cliques

4.3 – lack of cultural cliques

5.0 – Discrimination and Racism

5.1– teachers

5.2 – students

5.3 – religion

5.4 – racialization issues

5.5 – intersections of race and gender

5.6 - stereotyping

6.0 – Learning English

6.1- English in mainstream courses

6.2 – English as Second Language

7.0 – Extracurricular Activities

7.1- students are involved

7.2 – students are not involved due to the lack of time

7.3 – students are not involved as they are not aware of the system

7.4 – students are not involved due to school work

8.0 – Violence in Schools

8.1 – gender motivated

8.2 – culturally/ racially motivated

8.3 – unknown reasons

9.0 – Friendships

9.1 – school friends

9.2 – friends outside of school

9.3 – fall outs with friends

9.4- racialization issues

10 – Inspirations for the future

11- Heritage

12 - School likes

12.1 – sports

12.2 - school personnel

13.0 - Problems and Difficulties in School

13.1 – course related

13.2 – acculturation related

13.3 – lack of motivation

14.0 – Alternative sites of assistance

14.1 – homework clubs

14.2 – "ajax"

14.3 – libraries

14.4 - settlement agencies: monetary, housing, counselling, etc

15.0 – Parental Involvement

15.1 – school

15.2 – siblings involved in school

15.3 – lack of parental relationship

15.4 – parental restrictions

16 - Places of residence before Canada

17.0 – School Dislikes

17.1 – cultural cliques

17.2 – ESL program

17.3 – school rules

18.0 –School Leaving Age

18.1 – leaving school early (not graduating)

18.2 – staying in school (to graduate)

19 – School experience prior to Canada

20.0 – Teachers and School Personnel

20.1 – helpful

20.2 – lack of support

20.21 – lack of support, ESL teachers

20.3 – low expectations

20.4 – racism

21.0 – differential treatment

21.1 – negative

21.2 - positive

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Demographics

Please tell me your name, your age

When did you come to Canada, and then specifically to this city?

Tell me a bit about your life before you came to this city.

Describe your cultural and religious heritage

What languages do you speak, read or write other than English?

Tell me about your education before coming to this city.

Education in Alberta

Tell me about your education in this city.

What do you like best about school? And why?

What do you like the least about school, and wish you could change it?

Parents and Friends

How are your parents involved with your education?

What do they think of the school?

Tell me about your friends in school.

Race and Culture

Every school has cultural events that students and teachers organize. How do you participate in these events? Explain.

What do you think 'racism' is?

Alternative Sites of Learning

Is there any other place, other than your school, where you go to learn and study? Explain

Why do you go there?

How does it help you in your schoolwork or school life?

Appendix C

Demographic Information

Name:

Age:

Date of arrival in Canada:

Date of arrival to this city:

Country of birth:

Country lived in before coming to Canada:

Have you lived in a refugee camp? Where:

School in the city:

Grade:

Cultural and religious heritage:

Languages spoken:

Languages that you can read and write in:

Appendix D

Student Consent Letter and Form

Date:

Dear Student,

My name is Sabira Devjee, and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. As part of the Master's Degree requirements, I am conducting research on the educational experiences of refugee students in Edmonton. I want to know how the needs of refugee students are being met in the school systems and community centers.

I would like your permission to include you in my research. I would like to interview you, asking you questions about your school life. The interview will be tape recorded, transcribed and then shared with you to check for its accuracy. You can remove any part of the interview from these transcripts. You also have the right not to answer any questions you don't want to answer. I will need about 60 to 90 minutes of your time for the interview. I may request a second interview if we do not have the time to go over all the questions. It will take place at this center at a time that is convenient to you.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity by using false names, thus I will not identify you, or any other individual or organization by name. Please understand that if you agree to take part in this study, and then later decide at any point of the research that you no longer want to participate, you have the right to say no.

All interview transcripts will be kept under lock and key for 5 years after my study is completed. Thereafter it will be destroyed. I hope to share the findings of this study in academic journals and conferences, and if you want, I can send you a summary of the study.

Please indicate on the form below if you are willing to participate in this study or not. If you are under the age of 18, then your parents will also need to sign the attached consent form. I thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kelly, or my Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Frank Peters, at the following numbers and email addresses.

Sabira Devjee	463 5663	sdevjee@ualberta.ca
Dr. Jennifer Kelly	492 4229	jrkelly@ualberta.ca
Dr. Frank Peters	492 3681	frank.peters@ualberta.ca

Sincerely,
Sabira Devjee

University of Alberta, Education Policy Studies

Student Consent Form

I, _____, give / do not give permission to

(Student's Name)

Sabira Devjee, to include me _____, in the

(Student's Name)

research project outlined above.

_____ _____ _____

Student Signature Date Phone #

____ I am 18 years old and over

____ I am under 18 years of age, and my parents have signed the consent letter

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study after the research has been completed.

____ Yes

____ No

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participation rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at 780 492 2261.

Appendix E

Parent Consent Letter and Form

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Sabira Devjee, and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. As part of the Master's Degree requirements, I am conducting research on the educational experiences of refugee students in Edmonton. I want to know how the needs of the refugee students are being met in the school systems and community centers.

I would like your permission to include your child in my research. I would like to interview your child, asking questions about his/her school life. The interview will be tape recorded, transcribed and then shared with your child for its accuracy. Your child can remove any part of the interview from these transcripts. Your child also has the right not to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer. I will need about 60 - 90 minutes of your child's time for the interview. I may need a second interview if we are not able to get through all the questions. It will take place out at the community center your child attends at a time that is convenient to your child.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity by using false names, thus I will not identify your child, or any other individual or organization by name. Please understand that if you agree for your child to take part in this study, and then later decide at any point of the research that you no longer want him/her to participate, you have the right to say no.

All interview transcripts will be kept under lock and key for 5 years after my study is completed. Thereafter it will be destroyed. I hope to publish the findings of this study in academic journals, and present it at conferences. At your request, I can send you a summary of the study.

Please indicate on the form below if you are willing to have your child participate in this study or not. I thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kelly, or my Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Frank Peters, at the following numbers and email addresses.

Sabira Devjee	463 5663	sdevjee@ualberta.ca
Dr. Jennifer Kelly	492 4229	jrkelly@ualberta.ca
Dr. Frank Peters	492 3681	frank.peters@ualberta.ca

Sincerely,
Sabira Devjee

University of Alberta, Education Policy Studies

Parent Consent Form

I, _____,

(Parent's / Guardian's Name)

_____ give permission to

_____ do not give permission to

Sabira Devjee, to include my child _____,

(Student's Name)

in the research project outlined above.

_____ _____ _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature Date Phone #

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study after the research has been completed.

____ Yes

____ No

Please return the signed consent form with your child in the sealed envelope provided. I will be at the community center on _____to collect it.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participation rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at 780 492 2261.

Appendix F

Community Organization Consent Letter and Form

Date:
To:
Dear:
My name is Sabira Devjee, and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. As part of the Master's Degree requirements, I am conducting research on the educational experiences of refugee students in Edmonton. I want to know how the needs of the refugee students are being met in the school systems and community centers.
I would like to include your center as part of my research. I want to collect documents that you have produced, orient myself to your organization, develop an understanding of the services you offer to refugee youth in meeting their educational needs.

I am also interviewing refugee youth themselves on their own educational experiences, and I hope that you will assist me in finding such participants from your center. I will provide all appropriate letters of consent for the youth and their parents for this purpose. I would also appreciate the provision of a private soundproof room with an electrical outlet for the purpose of interviewing the youth.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity by using false names, thus I will not identify your organizations or any individuals by name. Please understand that your organization's participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without explanation, sanction or prejudice to future rights. Raw data will be under lock and key for 5 years after the completion of my studies, and will be destroyed thereafter. I hope to publish articles on the findings of this research in academic journals and present it at conferences. At your request, I can send you a summary of the study.

If your center is interested in taking part in this research, please sign the attached consent form and return it to me at the specified address or fax number on the form. Please retain a copy of the consent letter for your records. I will contact you to arrange a time that is convenient to both parties when I can begin my research of your organization. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kelly, or my Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Frank Peters, at the following numbers and email addresses.

Sabira Devjee	463 5663	sdevjee@ualberta.ca
Dr. Jennifer Kelly	492 4229	jrkelly@ualberta.ca
Dr. Frank Peters	492 3681	frank.peters@ualberta.ca

Sincerely,
Sabira Devjee,

University of Alberta, Education Policy Studies

Community Organization Consent Form

I have read the letter by Sabira Devjee concerning her research on the educational experiences of refugee youth in Edmonton and how the community centers are assisting in the education of refugee youth. The center agrees to participate in it under the conditions specified in the letter.

_____ _____

Signature of the participant/ organization represented Phone Number

_____

Date

_____

Signature of the researcher

_____

Date

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study after the research has been completed.

____ Yes

____ No

Please send this consent form to the following address:

Sabira Devjee
Education Policy Studies
Education North, 7th floor, Office 7 - 104
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
Or fax it to:
780 492 2024

Attention: Sabira Devjee

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participation rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at 780 492 2261.